

# イラスト 和ヶ原聰司 和ヶ原聰司

3

Satoshi Wagahara  
Illustration ■ Oniku



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ハイペース ■ 029



Life is Beautiful.



# McRonald's Is Life Beautiful?

His name is "Satan" who is a prisoner  
of the hourly-wage system-----!



Shiro=Ashiya

Hanzo=Urushihara

Sadao=Maou



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## Prologue

The setting sun sank below the mountain ridge, and the purple color of night took over the sky. A small, shadowy figure moved quietly through the fields where grass grew high enough to reach one's waist.

“Sheesh, if I could just fly, I’d get there in no time.”

The voice of the shadowy figure was that of a woman.

“I’ll be caught if I fly, and I’ll be caught if I walk. Life sure has gotten tough since then.”

She walked slowly and carefully, being wary of her surroundings and taking care to avoid drawing attention to herself.

Soon, she came to a wooden wall that seemed to stretch out endlessly.

“This sure was finished quickly! It’s been barely over a year.”

She noticed a cross made from five separate parts hanging on the wall.

It was the symbol of the United Pente-Continental Knights. The shape was taken from the world map formed by the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western continents, with the main continent in the center.

The United Pente-Continental Knights, led by the Hero, Emilia, were originally formed by uniting human forces throughout the world to oppose the Demon King's army, which had overrun the world.

Currently, however, the organization served the government, which was in charge of reconstructing the central continent, which had been utterly destroyed by the Demon King's army.

This wall that bore the symbol of the United Pente-Continental Knights and seemed to stretch out with no end had been erected to restrict entry to a certain area.

As the darkness of the night spread quickly through the sky, dark memories of "that area" still resonated throughout the central continent.

The Demon King's castle.

The dwelling place of the king of the demon world, Satan, and the fortress from which he carried out his invasion. The only three people who had seen the castle with their own eyes and lived to tell the tale were Emeralda Etuva, Albertio Ende, and Olba Meyer.

After the disappearance of Emilia and Satan, the United Knights began a massive operation to eliminate the remainder of the Demon King's army.

Once Satan and Alciel, the last remaining survivor of the four Archdemons, disappeared, the remainder of the army that humanity had struggled against for so long became a directionless flock of birds. They were eliminated in just slightly over a year.

However, there were still sporadic incidents caused by surviving demons in the central continent.

The ultimate goal of the United Knights' operation was to bring down the Demon King's castle. The Demon King's castle stood over where Isla Centrum, once the trading center of the world, used to be, like a symbol of his domination of Ente Isla.

The castle had appeared overnight atop the ruins of a city that had been destroyed by invading demons. Its size greatly surpassed that of the sacred temple of St. Ignold in the western continent or the ancient castle, Soutengai, that stood in the capital of the eastern continent.

Its interior was large as it was mysterious. Rumors still abounded that it was full of underground dungeons filled with mountains of the bones of central continent residents who had been sacrificed, or that it was haunted by the spirits of the dead, or that it still housed the remaining demons. The fact that this ominous castle still stood in the middle of the world was not helping the morale of the reconstruction workers, and was a very bad omen. Therefore, the army entered the castle very early on with the intention of razing it to the ground.

However, the recurring hallucinations of monsters and outbreaks of plagues significantly slowed the rate at which the soldiers could demolish the castle. Furthermore, the political debate over which continent would take the initiative in restoring the central continent after the influence of the Demon King's army was completely eradicated seemed to be locked in a stalemate.

The only possible course of action was to wall off the castle and prevent any ordinary citizens from entering, deploy knights to the area to continue the deconstruction, and see what conclusion the debate would reach.

“Well, maybe it’s better this way. We wouldn’t have been able to do anything if it had been destroyed right away.”

She stood in front of the wall.

Seeing that there were no guards patrolling, she hopped right over the wall, which was at least ten meters tall, without any assistance.

Just for that moment, her entire body gave off a faint glow and lit up the dark.

Over the wall, there was nothing but endless, overgrown grass and trees that made the the abandoned road she was walking on seem like a lively town street. Not even night birds or insects were present; it was a truly dead world.

She ran across the fields of death to the center of the world.

Soon, a dark shadow appeared in the distant sky.

It was a spire that stood higher than any castle in the world, as if challenging the heavens. The dwelling place of demons and darkness, in all its dark majesty.

However...

“Sheesh, this looks so cliche. Couldn’t they have made it more original?”

She looked at the majestic spire and muttered disappointedly.

Arriving at the east side of the Demon King’s castle, she passed through the giant gate that could easily let a giant walk right through. She looked up at the gigantic engraving of a bird that resembled an eagle, and headed into the Demon King’s Castle without hesitation.

The great corridor had no sign of life anywhere, and split into paths that led to different areas of the castle, much like an ant colony. She wasted no time in choosing a path, and kept moving forward. On her left hand shone a ring with a violet stone.

The highest floor of the Demon King’s castle was where the Hero Emilia was led to by her sacred sword.

The throne of Satan, the Demon King.

A full moon shone through the windows of corridors and terraces numerous enough that a normal human being would have lost all sense of direction.

She continued to run through the darkness as it was illuminated by the full moon in the night sky. How long had she been running?

Eventually, she reached the throne room that had no king.

The chamber was undecorated, and marks of the battle with the hero still remained. She immediately ran behind the throne that the demon king had once sat upon; a throne no one else would have dared to approach.

And behind the heavy curtains was...

“Ah...”

A room.

An obvious room.

A long, gigantic chest that had most likely contained the Demon King’s clothes in its former, glorious days. A bookshelf too tall for any human. On top of a desk much taller than her was the feather of a gigantic bird, standing upright with its quill stabbing through the desk.

“There’s really nothing here.”

There was not a single book on the bookshelf. The cover on the long chest was open, with nothing but dust inside, and there was no ink to use with the quill to write.

It wasn't that this room had been cleaned out; there had simply been nothing in it in the first place.

“...Where did you go wrong?”

She muttered sadly and walked across the empty room, heading for the large window in the back of the room where the moonlight leaked through. She opened the window.

Behind the glassless window was a terrace that faced south.

“Found ya!”

In a garden that was slightly too big to be called a kitchen garden were rows of pots, in one of which stood a majestic tree.

The tree was strangely shaped; two separate trees twisted around each other to make one single tree.

“I wish it was taken care of more carefully. It really stands out if it's just sitting right here.”

She laughed slightly, and stroked the tree with her left hand as if the tree had been lonely with no one taking care of it.

The moonlight shone on the stone on the ring on her left hand, causing the stone to begin to shine as well. The tree also started to glow in response.

A sphere of light appeared between her hand and the tree, and the stone's light faded. The tree, even though it had stood vibrantly just a moment ago, crumbled and died in an instant.

“You grew nicely! There, there.”

She paid no attention to the crumbled tree, and smiled at the sphere.

However...

“!!”

She quickly glanced to the east from the terrace.

Five stars lined the moonlit sky.

Or rather, they were not stars. Something was shining and flying towards her.

“I figured they’d notice. So fast! They must be desperate. Well, I guess it’s not that surprising that they are.”

She grabbed the light sphere and returned to the room.

“Well, if anything happens, I know their general location, so I’ll just have them take care of you.”

As if in response to her monologue, the light sphere pulsated warmly.

“Well then, shall we play a game of tag like we did in the good ol’ days? How much better have you become in the last few hundred years, little Gabriel?”

She acted like she was having fun, and disappeared into the darkness of the Demon King’s castle.

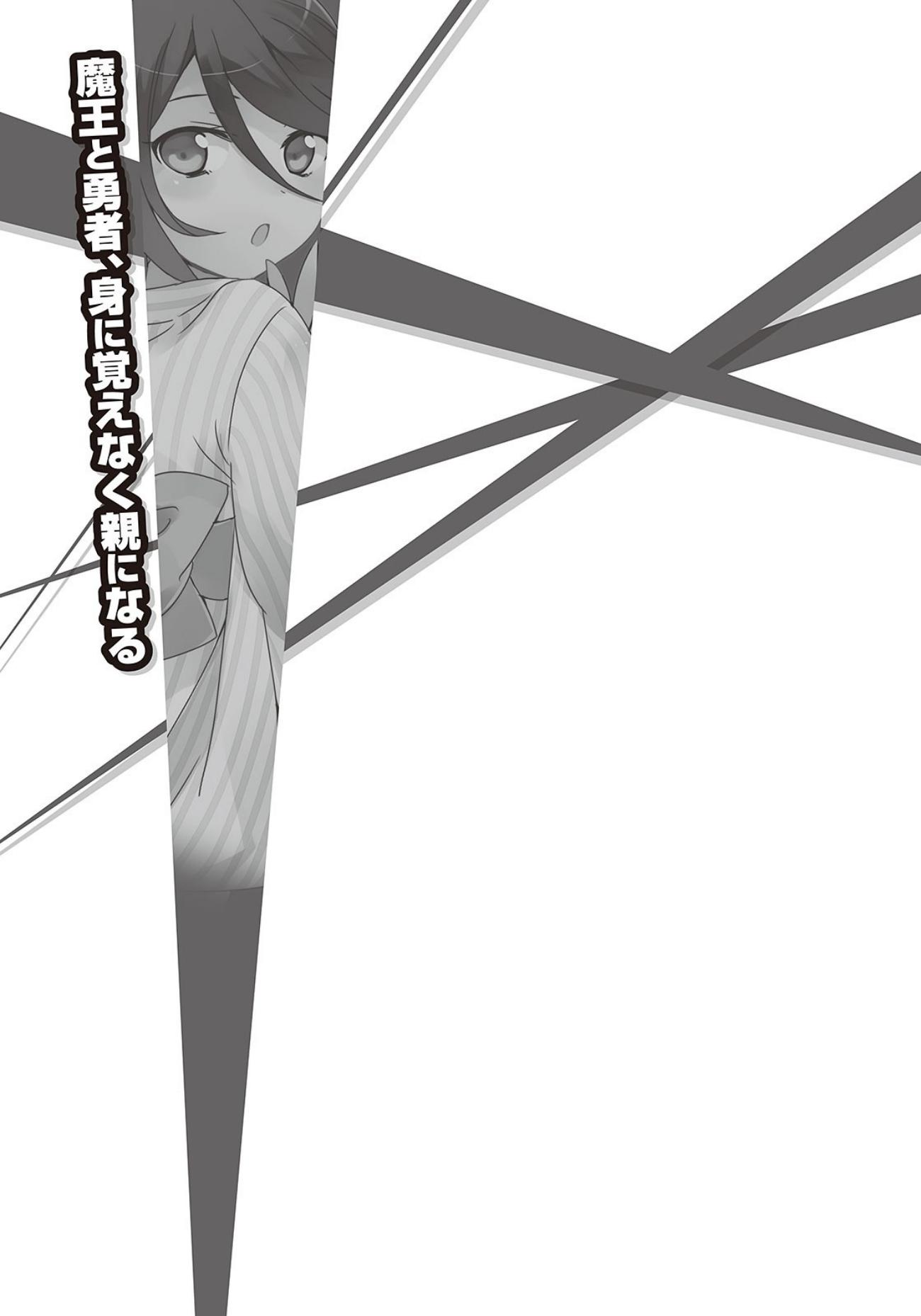
The second moon that ruled the night sky of Ente Isla was just about to rise above the horizon beyond the five stars, far east of the castle terrace.

The blue moon and the red moon were lined up by the time the five shooting stars arrived at the castle.

And the light that emanated from the woman, the light that illuminated the demon king’s castle — was already gone without a trace.

## **Chapter 1: The Demon King and Hero Unwittingly Become Parents**

魔王と勇者、身に覚えなく親になる



In a room filled with the smell of machine oil and metal, polished gears began revving and spinning.

The chain machinery generated great power and acceleration from minimal power input. Furthermore, the new gear shifting system allowed for flexible control.

The frame that composed the body was polished and shiny. Light, but sturdy.

Its safety features were also top-class. Optic sensors allowed automatic safety flash activation to the front, and an alarm let the user know the location of the vehicle. Also included were reflector plates which allowed for quick response in the event of unforeseen enemy contact from any direction.

Its ease of use however, did not take away from its loading capacity or the comfort of the cockpit at all.

The seat was made of leather. It had a high-capacity container in the front, and an option to outfit loading units in various locations.

“So, what do you think? I got you everything you wanted!”

The mechanic, who was covered in the smell of machine oil, pointed to the machine proudly.

“...I won’t know until I try it out.”

The other young man shook his head and made a difficult expression. And then, the oily man replied,

“I thought you’d say that. I’m done with setting it up, and I put everything I have into it. It’ll weather a hundred years of you riding it, no problem.”

He crossed his arms as if issuing a challenge.

“I look forward to testing that.”

The young man grinned and helped himself onto the seat.

“Oh... this is...”

The man covered in machine oil grinned at his surprised tone.

Off to the side, a small shadow watched the two men and muttered gloomily.

“What kind of farce is this?”

Paying no attention to the voice, the young man grabbed the handle and stepped on the right pedal.

In that moment, the man exclaimed in a shocked voice,

“Whooooo! Amazing! It’s so light! Having a gear shifting system on a bike makes it this light!?”

The young man let out a great shout with a broad smile on his face as he pedaled out of the storage room and rode around.

“I’ll take it!”

“Great! And since it’s you, Maou-chan, I’ll give you a special discount. How does 29,800 yen sound?”

“You’re the best, Hirose-san! Oh, and she’s paying for it. Thanks, Suzuno.”

The young man called Maou nodded to a girl who was wearing a yukata and sitting in a folding chair.

The man covered in machine oil raised his eyebrows and looked at the girl.

The girl Maou had called Suzuno, who looked like she did not want to be there at all, took out a traditional silk coin purse.

“Shop Master, what was the meaning of of your verbal exchange just now?”

Hirose's Cycle Shop was a five minute walk from Sasazuka Station, which was on the Keiou line in the Bosatsu-Door\* shopping district of Shibuya. Hirose, the manager, took the towel that was wrapped around his head and laughed.

“He's just really enjoying himself! But are you really going to pay for it, miss? Are you Maouchan's girlfriend?”

In that moment, the girl's entire face twitched.

“Please do not make such a poor joke. There was a certain circumstance that forced me to pay for it. Sadao-dono, how long are you going to loaf around for? Do you not need to fill out a antitheft registration form or something? Return here immediately.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Sadao Maou came back with a grin stretching across his face, along with his brand-new, shiny, high-end city bicycle.

The aluminum frame was equipped with reflector plates in all directions and a headlight that turned on automatically in the dark. It was Maou's dream bicycle, the six-speed Bridgesutton\* city bike.

The bicycle itself is 29,800 yen, and the anti-theft registration is 300 yen... Let's round it off by giving you another discount. How does 30,000 yen even sound?"

(Note: The Bosatsu-Door shopping district is a spoof of the Kannon-Door shopping district, and

Bridgesutton is a spoof of Bridgestone, a Japanese bicycle manufacturer.)

"I thank you for your generosity."

Suzuno took out three neatly folded 10,000 yen bills, flattened them out, and handed them over.

"Thanks. Since you're here already, why don't you get one too, Miss? How 'bout it?"

Suzuno shook her head, despite Hirose's recommendation.

"I have not had the necessary training, so I will have to decline for now."

"Necessary training?"

Hirose tilted his head slightly. Suzuno answered in a serious tone,

“I have heard that riding a bicycle does not require a license, but instead requires training through objects called ‘training wheels.’”

Hearing her, Maou imagined the short Suzuno furiously riding a children’s bicycle with training wheels, and almost burst out laughing.

“That might be pretty cute.”

“You are not thinking of something stupid, are you?”

Seeing Maou trying to contain his laughter, Suzuno glared over at him.

“Sigh... Shop Master, I would like a copy of the receipt.

“Huh? Oh, right. Is it alright with you if it’s handwritten? It’s 30,000 yen, so I’ll need my seal.”

“Please make it out to ‘St. Ignold, Inc.’”

Maou was surprised upon hearing that.

“He-hey, that’s...”

However, Hirose did not react in the slightest. He quickly finished writing the receipt, and tore it off.

“Here, thanks! Maou-chan, since she bought it for you, take good care of it.”

“Uh, yeah...”

Leaving the bicycle shop with Hirose sending them off, they walked into the street of the shopping district and headed toward the apartment complex where they lived.

Maou was giddy with his brand new bicycle, but Suzuno grimaced in the summer heat under her parasol.

“What’s the point of you getting a copy of the receipt?”

“If I keep accurate records of my expenditures, I might be able to have them reimbursed in the other world after I defeat you in the future.”

“So you’re going to tell them ‘I was forced to pay for a bicycle for my target, the demon king,’ or something like that?”

Suzuno glared from under the parasol.

“Should I also tell the Church’s clergy that Demon King Satan was a cheapskate demon who forced another to pay for his bicycle?”

“This is an age where leaders are expected to be moderate with their resource usage. It’s supposedly not a bad thing for the ruler to look like they care for the commoners and show their dedication to eco-friendliness. And I’ve got that down!”

The demon king who boasted of his eco-friendly appeal stopped, and turned towards the shop that he had just passed.

“Hold up a sec, Suzuno. I need to stop by the stationery shop.”

Maou locked his bike by the roadside, and headed into the small shop, which looked more like the kind of place that would sell toys or sweets rather than stationary. When he came back outside, Suzuno looked quizzically at the item he had purchased.

“What are you buying instant glue for?”

“Heheheh, glad you asked! Take a look at this!”

Maou grinned, and took out a small, red piece of plastic out of his pocket.

“This is the reflector plate from Dullahan, the bike you destroyed. When the police called me there and were about to scrap it, I was able to get this back. It’s like a memento.”

Maou glued the reflector plate onto the new bike’s metallic front basket.

“Now, he has inherited the soul of Dullahan, who proudly sacrificed his life to protect his master!

Henceforth, he shall be known as DullahanII!”

“...Good for him.”

She had nothing against Maou being attached to his possessions, but she thought that a man his age giving his bicycle a name was sad to look at in many ways.

“Are you finished? Let us go, Demon King.”

And that man was none other than the nemesis of all humanity, the lord of all demons, Demon King Satan.

The girl who called herself Suzuno Kamazuki while she was in Japan sighed deeply, and began walking without waiting for Maou’s reply.

Suzuno walked gloomily as her clear, glass hairpin reflected the bright summer sun that shone straight through her parasol.

\*\*\*

Demon King Satan. The lord of demons who had attempted to conquer the distant, alternate world of Ente Isla.

Sadao Maou. The young adult who made a living through part-time jobs in a residential area just outside the city of Tokyo.

No human or god could have predicted that one day, the demon king who aimed to take over the world would find himself living meal-to-meal by taking part-time jobs near Sasazuka Station in Shibuya, Tokyo.

A little over a year had passed since he lost the battle against the Hero, Emilia Justina, and found himself in the alternate world, Japan.

Making the sixty-year-old wooden apartment in Villa Rosa with an area of six tatami mats into his temporary Demon King Castle, the demon king Satan — or rather, Sadao Maou — became a part-time worker who had taken control of his future. However, in just a few months, many incidents had occurred in his vicinity.

The first year was filled with hardships and money had been hard to come by, but he had worked diligently every day.

And about nine months ago, he had been promoted to a long-term, part-time position at a MgRonald located near Hatagaya Station, one stop away from Sazuka Station. Earning the approval of his supervisor, a position which he himself hoped to be attain one day, Maou's life in Japan began to settle on its course.

However, the moment Hero Emilia, who had taken on the name Emi Yusa, arrived in order to give chase to the exiled Demon King, his peaceful days ended.

On the other hand, one could also say that the busy, law-abiding lifestyle of making enough money to eat through a part-time job was never peaceful to begin with.

Either way, his traitorous former subordinate nearly killing him and even humans betraying their own Hero certainly qualified as disruptions of his everyday routine.

The Demon King resolved all those incidents and his peaceful life returned. He went back to diligently working part-time and earning a living so he could eat three meals a day.

Even when the Hero came over from three train stops away to pick a fight, and a clergy of the Church of the Divine Creed moved in next door in order to whittle away at the demons' health using holy food, the Demon King kept living the life of an ordinary citizen in order to someday resume his plan to take over the world.

Holding onto the belief that this ordinary, everyday life and his diligent work at MgRonald in order to climb up the corporate ladder would one day lead to his goal of world domination...

Crestia Bell, the Head Interrogation Officer of the Judicial Correction Division of the Church of Divine Creed, also named Suzuno Kamazuki, lived next door to the Demon King Castle and gave its residents food that was poisonous to them. However, Maou returned the favor by making her pay him back for the bicycle that she had destroyed, and then some.

Possibly because of that, Suzuno's sour expression never left her face the entire time.

“...Was it a bit too expensive?”

Maou asked Suzuno as if he was concerned about her mood, even though she was the one who was after his life and had destroyed his bicycle. Suzuno sighed deeply under her parasol, without looking up at Maou's face.

“I think I am beginning to understand why she is lackadaisically leaving you at peace.”

“Huh?”

“Is the shop master of that bicycle shop a friend of yours?”

“Yeah. We used to just see each other at community clean-ups and weren’t really close, but his wife and kid came to MgRonald a few times. We started to become friends after that.”

Maou described his very normal relationships with other humans. Suzuno turned the corner of the street and entered the shade, letting out a sigh as the heat decreased and her level of misery did the opposite.

“I prepared for the worst when you said we were going to the bicycle shop.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Suzuno took a thin catalog out of her tote bag and handed it to Maou.

“I trembled at the thought of what sort of high-end model you would demand as an indemnity to the demon king... I already realized that the debt I owed you was great.”

Maou flipped through the catalog quickly with one hand. It was a bicycle catalogue.

“A Mauntain Bike? Or a Road cyc... Load Cycle? Or that Bee Em or something that can drive through rough terrain! Anyone would have thought you’d demand something equivalent to those!”

“...You don’t have to use western words if you don’t know how they’re pronounced.”

“I have to challenge myself with language studies! A-anyway, just 30,000 yen even after anti-theft registration was a bit anticlimactic. A letdown, even. I brought 200,000 yen with me today.”

“Oh, come on. Did you really think I’d demand something that luxurious when you already know how I live? I got Dullahan I for 6,980 yen at a Dokki Li Quijote\*\* in the southern part of town.”

Suzuno only became more miserable as Maou gave the catalog back while boasting of his frugality.

“A bloodthirsty demon king was buying something with a human’s money. It would be absurd to not think something was going to go wrong!”

“You really don’t trust me, do you. Or does that mean that you think you can always trust the demon king to be evil? But either way, no offense to Hirosesan, but I doubt he’d carry something that expensive.”

**\*\*Dokki Li Quijote is a spoof on Don Quijote, a discount store chain in Japan.**

As Maou laughed nonchalantly, Suzuno looked up with an annoyed expression.

However, Maou seemed to think of something and looked down. Suzuno glanced away, avoiding eye contact.

“But how do you have 200,000 yen on you? You just got here recently, and don’t even have a job. I’ve been working my tail off, and I’ve never even seen my account balance above 200,000.”

“Unlike you or Emilia, I was able to make preparations before coming here.”

Suzuno shrugged her shoulders and answered tersely.

When Suzuno had gone to Shinjuku for the first time with Hero Emilia, also named Emi Yusa, she stopped by a large pawn shop, Mugihyo,\*\* where she had pawned off some jewelry which fetched prices that would have made Maou’s eyes pop out.

Of course, she had no intention of telling Evil incarnate, the demon king, exactly how much money she had. Suzuno had enough margin to not have to work for several months as long as she lived modestly.

“Yeah yeah, it must be nice to be you, Ms. High-roller.”

Even while giving Suzuno a back-handed compliment, Maou rang the bell of his new bicycle with a broad grin on his face, like a little child who had just gotten a new toy.

“Well, either way, thanks. I’ll take good care of it.”

“...”

Upon hearing something unexpected, Suzuno looked up at Maou without thinking. Their eyes met even more so than they had before, and she hurriedly broke the line of sight with her parasol.

**\*\*Mugihyo is a spoof of Komehyo, a large pawn shop chain in Japan**

“It’s absurd for someone as evil as him to thank someone without a hint of pretense or maliciousness. When was the last time someone thanked me so honestly?” she thought.

“I-I merely paid my debt. It already belongs to you, so do whatever you wish with it.”

“Yeah.”

They walked for a bit longer in silence.

“De-Demon King.”

“Ah?”

Trying to shake off a feeling of uneasiness that she did not understand, Suzuno broke the silence, stopped walking, and pointed to her side.

“Wha-what are those? They suddenly appeared over the past several days in shops that handle flowers and in supermarkets.”

Suzuno pointed to the front of a flower shop.

Plain, white bundles of sticks lined the front of the shop, pushing the colorful flowers out to the side.

“Oh, that’s ogara.”

Maou answered without a second thought, but Suzuno nodded with a surprised expression.

“I see, so they’re dried and shaped like that before they’re grated by tofu shops.”

“...Tofu?”

Maou was confused for a moment as to what Suzuno was suddenly having an epiphany about, but understood what was happening upon remembering the tofu shops they had passed by earlier.

“Uuh, hey, Suzuno. It’s not okara, it’s ogara. O-ga-ra.”\*\*

True to her status as a member of the Church of the Divine Creed’s diplomacy and religious mission division, Suzuno had invested significant effort for an Ente Islan in learning Japanese cultures and customs.

However, that worked against her as well. She often mixed up her research with some vocabulary she had already learned, causing her to say some strange things every once in a while such as the training wheel incident earlier.

“Oh, I know. I will have croquettes for dinner.”

“Listen when people are talking to you. And what are you, a housewife?”

“Croquettes are also fantastic cuisine, but to use okara, which was supposed to be nothing more than a wasted byproduct, and make a low-cost, lowcalorie cuisine out of it that is in no way inferior to the original is truly amazing. The ingenuity and skills of the chefs in this country are fearsome indeed.”

As Suzuno tilted her head and thought out loud about her dinner menu and the source of her food, a married couple stopped by the shop to buy a bundle of ogara.

“It’s almost the Obon Festival. That’s used for Obon’s welcoming fire and sending-off fire.” Maou answered while pointing at the bundle of ogara.

“Obon... that’s right, the ceremony for households to celebrate the ancestral spirits. However, is that not typically held in August?”

As expected, she seemed to have researched matters pertaining to religion and spirituality thoroughly.

“Yeah. In the old, lunar calendar, the seventh month falls out on August of the Gregorian Calendar. But just in Tokyo, the welcoming fire is lit during July of Gregorian Calendar. And that’s what’s used to make the fire.”

**\*\*Ogara are stalks of hemp. Okara is a soy byproduct from making tofu and/or soy milk.**

“Hm. I was under the impression that this was a spiritually dead country, but practices like this are surprisingly widespread.”

“I wonder why only Tokyo does this early, though.”

“Yeah, there are lots of explanations, but the most prevalent one is that when Japan switched to the Gregorian Calendar from the old lunar calendar, the Department of State issued a law to conduct everything according to the new calendar, but apparently the only place that responded was Tokyo. The farthest parts of Japan in particular couldn’t switch from following the lunar calendar because they’d been following it for hundreds of years. They couldn’t just switch because a law was issued.”

“I see.”

“Ooooooh.”

“Even now, the Obon holidays are usually in the middle of August, right? But Tokyo and parts of

Kanagawa that were under the strong influence of the government back then conduct Obon during July of the Gregorian calendar, while everywhere else holds the festival in August, which is the seventh month of the old lunar calendar.

“...You seem to have really looked into this.”

“Maou-san, you know so much for a demon king!”

“Yeah, I spent a lot of last year running around researching stuff like this, but a lot of it ended up being useless trivia... huh?

“Hm?”

“Yes?”

Maou and Suzuno both realized something and turned around slowly at the same time.

“What!? Chi, Chii-chan, when did you...!!”

“Chiho-dono! How long were you here!?”

When she got there was a completely mystery. Chiho, who was Maou’s junior at work, a high school student, and the only Japanese person who knew about the alternate world of Ente Isla, stood there in her high school uniform.

However, she was not holding a school-specified backpack. Instead, she carried a silver, portable cooler box.

“Did I surprise you?”

Chiho smiled.

“I decided to give you a taste of your own medicine, Suzuno-san... but all I got out of it was what you were talking about after you decided you were having croquettes for dinner.”

“I-I see. School’s out already? Isn’t it too early?”

“We already finished our finals, so we’ve been having a lot of early dismissals.”

Chiho answered cheerfully. Come to think of it, she had said something about a test around the time of Tanabata, but she never talked about how her grades were back then, nor had she reduced her working hours. On top of that, her grades were not affected at all by the incidents involving Ente Isla. She must have nerves of steel.

As Maou thought that, Chiho’s wandering eyes stopped at Maou’s new bicycle.

“Oh? You got a new bike?”

“Yeah. Suzuno crushed my old one that time.”

Maou patted Dullahan II’s seat.

“The demon king said he found a bicycle that he liked, so I bought it to pay him back.”

Suzuno added with an annoyed tone, as she tried to regain her composure after being thoroughly surprised.

“By the way, why are you here, Chiho-dono?”

“I came to buy what you and Maou-san were talking about.”

Chiho pointed between the two of them, to the flower shop that they had been discussing earlier.

“Ogara?”

“Yes, I’m doing errands for my mom. And I was going to stop by your place later too, Maou-san.”

Chiho shifted her body, revealing the cooler that hung from her shoulder.

“We got some ice cream from my dad’s relatives, but my mom and dad don’t like to eat sweet things. I have a lot, so I thought maybe you’d like it.”

“Ice cream!? Seriously!? Is that really okay!?”

Maou’s eyes shone at the cold food that descended upon him.

“Whaaat!? That’s awesome! Yeah, yeah, I’ll take it! Thanks a lot!”

“Great. Okay, please hold on for a second, I’m going to get some ogara.”

Chiho headed to the flower shop after watching Maou jump for joy.

Suzuno watched the interaction between the demon king and the high school girl.

“...Maybe it’s okay to just leave him be?”

She muttered the question that she had started to ponder recently.

A cry of joy reverberated throughout the demon king’s castle, where the midsummer heat was overpowering and the electric fan did its best to circulate the warm, humid air.

“Ice cream!?”

“Ice cream!!”

A new sign of life was instilled into the eyes of Alciel and Lucifer, the residents of the demon king's castle and two of the archdemons who served the demon king Satan, as they heard the words of Maou, who came home with Chiho next to him.

“Bu-but, isn't this a Haagen Dezse premium gift box!? Are-are you sure we can have this!?”

“Please, don't worry about it, Ashiya-san. We still have a lot more back home.”

Chiho replied, holding the box out towards Ashiya.

Shiro Ashiya, who was in charge of the household chores and finances, saw what he believed to be a radiant, angelic light behind Chiho and fell prostrate before her.



“How... how can we even begin to thank you and your parents, Sasakisan...”

“Please, you’re making this a bigger deal than it really is.”

Even Chiho was taken aback by the tall Ashiya falling to the floor at an unbelievable speed. “Whoa! There are so many great flavors! Let’s hurry up and eat some, Ashiya! Get the spoons out! The spoons!”

“Urushihara... Don’t you have something to say to Chii-chan before that?”

Maou said with a tone of disgust to Urushihara, who couldn’t see anything other than the ice cream.

Lucifer, who called himself Hanzo Urushihara and spent his all his time loafing around in the demon king’s castle, paid no attention to his scolding.

“It’s fine, Maou-san. I already knew that he was that kind of person.”

Even Chiho spat out an insult while smiling.

In the incident where she had found out the true identities of Maou and the others, Chiho was put through a great ordeal by Urushihara, who had been their enemy at the time.

After he was defeated and surrendered to Maou, he spent most of his time in front of his laptop, not even helping with the house chores. Because of those reasons, Chiho had always been cold towards him.

Maou chuckled slightly, and patted Chiho gently on her shoulder in hopes that she would feel better.

“Well, anyway, I really appreciate it.”

“...Uh... um, no, no problem.”

In an instant, her face turned beet-red for a reason other than the heat.

Chiho had already told Maou of her feelings for him directly, but since she did it in a way that didn't require a reply from Maou, his response to her confession still remained up in the air.

However, she also understood why Maou couldn't answer her easily, so she was at peace even though her confession remained unanswered.

But even so, her heart jumped as a result of some of Maou's unintentional actions every once in a while.

“Uh, oh, right, Suzuno-san. We have to get Suzuno-san too... huh?”

Chiho tried to hide her blushing face by getting Suzuno, who had come back with them, but she was nowhere to be found as Chiho stuck her head out of the door and looked around outside. “She went back out as soon as she came back.”

“Re-really?”

“Strawberry, green tea, mint... what’s this? Pumpkin? Amazing!”

“Hey! Urushihara-san! You have to save some for Suzuno-san, too!”

Hearing Urushihara’s excited voice, Chiho came back inside quickly.

“Whaat? We have to save some for Bell, too?”

Urushihara looked absolutely dejected. Chiho puffed up her cheeks and snatched back several of the ice cream cups that Urushihara held in his arms.

“You can’t have any unless you listen to me! How many were you planning on eating by yourself!? You’ll get a stomachache!”

“Don’t treat me like a little kid! I’m hundreds of times older than you!”

“I don’t care how long you’ve lived, you’re still a kid, Urushihara-san! Even a grade schooler knows better than you!”

“Heey, can you tone down the fighting? It’s already hot enough as it is.” Maou stepped into the fight slowly to break it up, took the cooler box, and handed it to Ashiya. “Anyway, take one cup and put the rest of them in the freezer. Just save a vanilla cup or something for Suzuno.”

“As you wish, sir.”

Ashiya took the cooler respectfully, and bowed to Chiho once again. He then proceeded to put the rest of the ice cream in the freezer neatly, one by one.

“Whaaaaat? Only one?”

Still holding on to the strawberry-flavored ice cream in his hand, Urushihara stared longingly at the cups that were being put away.

“Why do we have to save one for Bell? She’s our enemy, isn’t she?” “U-rushi-ha-ra-san!?”

“Wha-what, Chiho Sasaki!? She’s your enemy too, isn’t she? In more ways than one!” Chiho’s blush, which had nearly faded away, returned in full force after hearing Urushihara’s words.

“She-she’s my enemy!! But she’s my friend too!” She replied firmly.

“Huh? What does that even mean?”

“This is this, and that’s that! You can’t even understand that. That’s why you’re still just a kid,

Urushihara-san.”

“Humph. Of course. I’m just a kid, so I don’t get it at all. I don’t understand how a girl can be jealous of her enem-igh!”

As Urushihara tried to bicker back to Chiho, he let out a groan as he was hit suddenly in the head.

“That is enough, Urushihara. If you insist on your insolence against Sasakisan, to whom we owe a great debt, I will confiscate your strawberry ice cream and cancel the internet service!”

The teary-eyed Urushihara looked up to Ashiya, who had an expression like that of an evil demon.

“You just eat and sleep all day, eat up our budget, and don’t lift a finger to help with the house chores! You are worse than Crestia, who bring us holy cooking! Even if the heavens allow it, I will not allow your insolence against Sasaki-san, who showed great kindness, regardless of who she is and who we are, to our lord Demon King and in her aid to the demon king’s castle!”

The stay-at-home husband of the demon king’s castle brought down a great lightning strike as he stood in front of Chiho to protect her.

Ashiya had not been comfortable with Chiho becoming close to Maou at first, but had been completely won over by Chiho and her mother’s cooking and now held an unwavering belief that the Sasaki family was their savior. Seeing Ashiya’s face, Urushihara made a frightened expression and took a step back.

“Fi-fine... Hmph, I can’t believe you AND Maou got completely tamed by some high school girl.”

He muttered and held his head where he had been hit, but still held onto his strawberry ice cream and sat dejectedly at his usual spot in front of the laptop desk.

“Over here, please, Sasaki-san. You’ll have better circulation here. Please, have some barley tea.

Ashiya sat Chiho at the head of the casual kotatsu, placed cups of ice cream and barley tea in front of her, and moved the fan so that it blew gently on her.

The new Demon King Castle, also known as Villa Rosa Sasazuka, did not have standard air conditioning.

In these kinds of situations, a renter such as Maou could arrange to have an air conditioning unit installed with the permission of the landlady, Miki Shiba. However, she was currently traveling overseas and had not returned in a long time.

Since Maou could now count on a regular source of income, unlike the previous year, he tried to directly contact the real estate company that also managed the property. However, he had found out that the company did not have a contract to perform direct modifications to the property.

Therefore, while the real estate company could change a lightbulb in the public spaces, they did not perform services for individual units, instead only acting as an agent for the landlady.

Case in point, the landlady Miki had let them know in person that there would be earthquake resistance construction two months ago.

In order to install air conditioning, a hole had to be made in the wall in order to connect the outside and inside units, therefore classifying it as “modification of property.”

The landlady was not trying to hide her whereabouts by traveling abroad, however. She would periodically send letters that told them where she was and what she was doing.

However, her letters usually arrived several weeks after she sent them, by which point she had already gone somewhere else. Therefore, using her letters to track her down so they could contact her was an effort in futility.

In any case, Maou, Ashiya, and Urushihara locked up her letters in a box without opening them. The “Landlady Swimsuit Incident” that occurred shortly after Urushihara arrived still left a scar in each of the three great demons’ hearts.

Ever since then, they had ignored every one of the letters until Suzuno moved in next door. Suzuno, who did not know who their landlady was, asked them “what if the letters contained some important message?” Because of that, they opened the newest letter just a few days ago. Her stationary was fancy to the touch and embroidered with golden thread, as usual. Her elegant penmanship was as fancy as always; one would assume it was written with a fountain pen or quill.

The landlady was apparently in Indonesia. Since the Swimsuit Incident had involved a picture from Hawaii, they feared something similar being sent from Bali. However, the letter said that she was participating in a ceremony that celebrated the spirits of the aborigines in Borneo Island, for reasons and motives unknown to them.

The picture included in the letter showed a group of what they believed to be the aborigines wearing their traditional colorful garments, and the landlady in the middle of them. She was wearing a dress woven with gold and silver sequins, as well as a wide hat with over a dozen feathers standing on end like a peacock with its colorful feathers spread out. On her face were an incredible amount of makeup and a smile.

In that moment, Maou gave up trying to get in contact with the landlady and decided to just let nature take its course.

They had managed to survive the previous year's summer without air conditioning, and this year, they now had Urushihara crippling their budget.

Maou convinced himself that this was a sign from God that he should not waste money just because he had a bigger salary. He didn't care whether it made sense for the demon king to make his decisions based on divine revelations.

"I thought it'd get really hot here, but this apartment gets surprisingly good circulation," observed Chiho.

"Yeah, that's one of the few redeeming qualities about this place. It's a corner unit, so we have a lot of windows, too."

To avoid the direct sunlight, the window was covered with a bamboo screen from the downtown Dokki Li Quijote, the birthplace of the original Dullahan. All the windows were opened as far as they would go, and the fan was able to circulate the warm air. This was only possible because Villa Rosa Sasazuka had a small garden, and was not directly surrounded by other buildings.

“Heeey, Maooou, are we really not gonna get A/C?”

Urushihara asked lazily and miserably, contrary to Chiho, who was enjoying the summer breeze.

“I already told you. We can’t get a hold of the landlady, and we have no money to pay for the construction. I don’t wanna die from the electric bill because of some cheap, half-baked air conditioning unit, anyway.”

“Uuuugh.”

“I’m not a fan of A/C either.”

Chiho also answered, while licking her rum-raisin ice cream.

“My classroom has A/C, but someone always sets it to the lowest temperature after P. E. or something. It’s always so cold.”

“Even the conveniences of civilization can bring ruin depending on their usage. I get chills just thinking about what the school’s electric bill must be,”

Ashiya remarked while eating a green tea ice cream and sympathizing with something completely irrelevant.

“People who do stuff like that are loud and annoying to begin with. If you try to raise the thermostat even a little bit, they’ll throw a fit saying, “It’s hot, it’s hot,” and turn it back down, right?”

Maou answered with a frown on his face, his spoon moving up and down in his mouth as he spoke. He was eating a cookie crunch ice cream.

“That’s exactly right!”

Chiho nodded and agreed emphatically.

“They don’t think ahead. Or it’s more like, they have to have instant gratification and don’t care about what’s gonna happen in the long term. And they’re always the raucous ones.”

“Exactly! ...wait, what?”

“Hm?”

“Maou-san, how do you know this?”

Chiho, who had been agreeing with a strained smile earlier, asked Maou curiously.

“Maou-san, you’ve never attended a Japanese high school, right?”

“That’s right.”

“When I’m listening to you, I agree with everything you say like we’ve all been there, done that.

But I just realized that that’s a bit strange.”

“Oh yeah, I guess so.”

Maou ate the last bite of his cookie crunch, savoring the taste. He got up, threw the lid into the inflammable plastic trash bin and the paper cup into the paper bin, then let out a sigh as he leaned against the sink.

“Demons are a bit more extreme when it comes to getting what they want, but humans and demons aren’t all that different when it comes to stuff like this.”

“...”

“...Maaan... one’s not enough...”

Ashiya stayed silent as he listened to Maou, but whether Urushihara was listening was unclear. Urushihara placed his empty strawberry ice cream cup next to his laptop desk and stared longingly at the freezer.

And at that exact moment...

“Oh? Suzuno, where were you? Chii-chan brought you some ice cream.”

Maou looked outside through the open window to see Suzuno walking by, carrying something large.

“I see. You have my gratitude. Once I am done with what I need to do, I will gladly accept her gift.”

They spoke through the window lattice. Suzuno seemed to be carrying a small bundle of timber. “...Hey, what’s that for?”

“Hm? It is merely timber.”

“No, I can see that. I’m asking what you’re going to use that for.”

The reason Maou was so insistent on asking was the absurdly huge amount of ogara that she carried in her other arm.

“As the member of the division of religious missions, I am interested in this “Obon” event.

Therefore, I thought to experience it myself.”

“...And?”

“It involves making this... welcoming fire, does it not? I have heard that the ancestral spirits return using the smoke from this welcoming fire.”

Seeing that his hunch was correct, Maou hung his head slightly and motioned through the lattice for Suzuno to come in.

Suzuno frowned, but opened the door to the demon king’s castle and came in regardless. “What do you want? I was told that it is preferable to do it before the sun sets, so I need to go get—ow!”

Maou chopped Suzuno in the head to prevent her from finishing.

“Wha—what was that for!?”

“Are you trying to burn down the apartment!? No matter how you look at it, you’ve got way too much fuel!”

“Wh—why you! You think me a fool just because I am from Ente Isla, don’t you!?”

Suzuno, slightly tearing up from the chop, snapped back angrily while inventing a new category of insult.

“Did you really think I would set fire to all of this!? The timber is for building a bonfire in the backyard! The only things that will be burnt are the bundles of ogara—ow! Ju—just because my hands are full, why you!”

Maou struck Suzuno a second time.

“Then that’s even worse! Didn’t you see Chii-chan buy just one bundle!? And a bonfire in the backyard? How big of a welcoming fire were you going to make!? This isn’t a campground!”

Behind the Villa Rosa Sasazuka building was a small area surrounded by block walling, consisting of an open space that was just big enough to be called a backyard.

A large broadleaf tree stood in the yard, on which an unbelievable number of cicadas came together every summer and sung their great chorus all season long, even though they were in the middle of an urban area.

“Come on, guys. Simmer down. Suzuno-san, I have some vanilla ice cream for you.”

“I will gladly accept it!”

Since the demon king’s castle had no air conditioning, it went without saying that Suzuno’s unit didn’t have it either. Suzuno accepted the ice cream as a means of conflict mediation for a different reason however. She brought brown sugar syrup and soy flour from her room and added it to her ice cream. After eating it slowly to savor the flavor, she asked a question to clarify something she still didn’t understand.

“Then how am I supposed to make a welcoming fire!? According to my research, priests are to either build a pyre, or set a grandiose bonfire in the temples by lining the frame with wild rice straws!”

It was unclear how she had researched all that in the short amount of time since they had bought the bicycle, but what she was describing would only apply to a full-fledged festival or a Buddhist temple ceremony.

“Ashiya.”

“Yes, my lord.”

Maou snapped his fingers, causing Ashiya to spring into action immediately. He brought an earthenware plate, a lighter, and a string made from twisted newspaper over to Maou.

“You can get all this from a 100-yen store. Any store that sells tableware will give you old newspapers for free. And this plate is called a horoku.”

Having said all that, Maou took one of Suzuno’s many ogara bundles and stepped outside.

“And ogara is just 90 yen if you go to the same place Chii-chan did. Even the expensive kind shouldn’t cost more than 200 yen.”

Chiho and the stone-faced Suzuno followed Maou outside as he walked down the apartment stairs and placed the horoku down next to the apartment gate, which faced the street.

He then took the vinyl wrapping off of the ogara bundle, and began breaking the long stalks into many shorter pieces.

Since it only took about two-thirds of the bundle to completely fill the horoku, Maou gave the rest of the bundle back to Suzuno and set fire to the newspaper string with the lighter.

Once he placed the burning string underneath the ogara, the fire spread quickly and smoke began to rise.

“That’s it! This is the simplest way to make a welcoming fire!”

“...What?”

“And by the way, you’ll set off the smoke detector if you do this in an apartment, so do it outside.

Any questions?”

Suzuno’s eyes were full of doubt and suspicion as she looked back and forth between the small welcoming fire on the horoku and Maou.

“...Don’t be absurd. The welcoming fire is for the purpose of leading the ancestral spirits. It is an important annual ritual, is it not? How can such a ceremony be so simple and casual?”

“I mean, you can say what you want, but this is what it is. Right?”

Maou looked not at Suzuno, but at Chiho for confirmation. Suzuno looked at Chiho as well, hoping that she would prove him wrong. However...

“It might be really casual, but he’s not wrong. It’s better to get the fire from a Bon paper lantern or from your family temple, but that’s difficult in urban areas. Also, you have to do this.”

Chiho leaned over towards the horoku.

“Put your hands together, and pray for your ancestors to be able to return here safely.”

“...Tha-that is it?

“And some homes with buddhist altars make cucumber horses, supposedly.”

“Oh, yes. My family does that, too.”

“Cu-cucumber horses? Wha-what are those?”

Suzuno became dazed and confused. Maou and Chiho looked at each other and shared a laugh before continuing.

“Once Obon is over, you make another fire to send off the spirits. When they’re on their way back with the welcoming fire, you make a cucumber look like a horse to have them come back quicker, and when you send them back with the sending-off fire, you make a eggplant cow to let them go back slowly.”

Maou explained seriously, while Chiho nodded repeatedly in agreement.

Watching the two of them, Suzuno placed her hand on her forehead and groaned.

“...I have run into many religions, but never have I encountered such a simple, yet complicated ceremony.”

“Well, in full-fledged celebrations, you might see candles lined up on the roads or a huge bonfire like what you were trying to do, but most people in residential areas just do this. Some Buddhist sects don’t do anything at all, and you can’t just start a fire anywhere. If you really want to see the real thing, why don’t you go to a festival in a more rural area in August?”

“Maou-san, you know so much.”

Chiho widened her eyes, looking stunned.

“I tried everything that I thought might help me recover my powers last year. I thought just maybe, some demon might notice the welcoming fire and come pick me up.”

Maou uttered sacrilegious words about a sacred ceremony meant for calling home ancestral spirits.

“But it’s not like my ancestors are on Earth, so I guess the welcoming fire would be just wasted.”

“You make it sound like you would have ancestors if you were to return to the other world.” Maou scowled at Suzuno’s words.

“Hey, you think we demons grow on trees or something? We have ancestors and parents, too.”

“Maou-san’s... parents...?”

Chiho knew Maou’s true identity, but found it hard to even visualize what a demon king’s parents might look like.

“Well, my ancestors and parents all bit the dust a long time ago, and to be honest, I don’t really care whether they’d follow my welcoming fire and return.”

However, Chiho was saddened by how casually Maou spat out those words.

“Please... don’t say something so sad.”

“I mean, even if you say that, there aren’t any decent demons that grieve for their ancestors, so we have no way of knowing anything about them. And besides, I don’t even remember my parents.”

“I-I see... I’m sorry, I didn’t mean for you to have to say all that.”

“No, no, I’m the one who started talking about this. Anyway...”

Maou waved his hand back and forth in front of his face while looking at the saddened Chiho as if to say, “Don’t worry about it,” and leaned over to the horoku and the welcoming fire, which had begun to weaken.

“Don’t forget to put the fire out completely afterwards. Traditionally, you’re supposed to put out the remains of the fire with water droplets from a wet lotus leaf, but have a bucket of water nearby just in case. The ashes go either to the plants for fertilizer or out with the flammable trash.”

“...There is not a shred of reverence or passion in this. This is the culmination of the lack of spirituality in modern Japan.”

“You should respect the customs of wherever you go. Think of it as being open-minded. And go get a bucket of water, Suzuno.”

And in that precise moment when Maou gave that instruction,

“Heeey, Maooou!”

Urushihara stuck his head out of the door and called out to Maou.

“The meddlesome one is comiiing!”

“The meddlesome one?”

Maou looks up towards the second floor, and then,

“Who’s meddlesome?”

He was filled with dread upon hearing that voice behind him.

He turned around slowly to face the chilling voice at his back.

And standing behind him was...

“Oh, hi there, Yusa-san.”

“Oh, Emilia. I see, it is already time.”

The Hero who had saved Ente Isla, Emilia Justina, who also went by the name of Emi Yusa, gave a cold glare.

She had a parasol in her right hand, and a large paper bag which seemed heavy in her left.

Pushing the stiff-faced Maou aside with the handle of her parasol, Emi looked up the stairs at Urushihara.

“Lucifer! How did you know that I was coming? Did you plant some creepy tracking device on me again!? Did you!?”

“O-of course not. I just saw you with a camera that points outside the room. He-hey, cool your head a bit. We have ice cream. Ice cream!”

“You know that I have every intention of eliminating you all once and for all, right?”

“I-I’m being serious! Here, see?”

Urushihara stepped inside for a second and came right back out, waving an ice cream cup and a webcam in his hands.

“...”

Emi glanced at the ice cream rather than the camera for a moment, but looked away immediately and turned toward Suzuno and Chiho.

“Hi, Chiho-chan. Did you bring the ice cream?”

“Uh, yes. My family got it as a gift, but my mom and dad don’t really eat sweets.”

“...Figures. These guys would never have the money to buy Häagen Dezse on their own.”

“Hey, don’t you know that it’s shallow to judge a man by his wealth?”

Maou interjected after being treated poorly, but Emi ignored him, took out a handkerchief, and began fanning herself.

“Mint Häagen Dezse cups only come in the gift boxes. They’re never sold individually. I can almost see your joyous expressions when you received the ice cream from Chiho-chan. If the demons from the other world saw you now, they would probably cry. You’re poor and useless, both as a demon and as a human.”

“...I’m sorry, Maou-san. There’s nothing I can say back to her.”

Chiho looked down apologetically.

“...Did you just come here to sneer at how poor we are? You sit in an airconditioned apartment and workplace all day, you environment-hating Hero!”

“I’m sorry, but the A/C came with the unit I live in, so it’d be a waste if I didn’t use it. Besides, it’s a new, energy-saving model and I never set it lower than 28 degrees. You have no right to criticize me.”

“Damn it! Just showing off the difference in our living standards like that!”

Emi ignored Maou, who was stomping his foot in frustration, and faced Suzuno.

“I got here a little early. I hope that’s alright.”

“No, it is fine. Thank you for coming. I will prepare myself right away, so please wait for me.”

Suzuno began climbing up the stairs after answering. However,

“Hold on, take this first.”

After being stopped, Suzuno was presented with a large paper bag.

Inside the bag was a box of energy drink bottles marked with a picture of a general bearing a hawk as his sigl. Maou and Chiho had no way of knowing what it was, but the contents of the bag were, unsurprisingly, the sacred-energy-restoring Holy Vitamin Beta that Emi had received from her Ente Islan allies.

“O-oh... this is it, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. Take two bottles per day. They’re hard to come by, so use them well.”

“...What kind of shady deal are you having over there?”

Maou interjected as the two of them had a vague conversation over a paper bag. They then turned toward Maou at the same time.

“Be especially careful around him.”

“That goes without saying.”

“Hey!”

Maou interjected, baring his teeth.

“I don’t remember doing anything heinous that would make you treat me like some kind of a thief!”

“What are you talking about? You were directly responsible for some very, very heinous work.” Emi’s response was cold.

“How is my work that got me promoted to shift manager in less than a year ‘heinous’?”

Maou’s tone became even more heated. However,

“Maou-san, I don’t think she’s talking about that work.”

Chiho added calmly.

“Yusa-san, Suzuno-san, are you going somewhere?”

“Yep. We’re going to go look at household appliances and cellphones.”

“Appliances and cellphones?”

“Indeed. My sojourn here likely is going to be more extended than I prepared for, so I must make the necessary preparations for my daily living here. However, the previous incidents have caused me to realize that my methods of investigation were outdated. Therefore, I wanted Emilia to accompany me in the event that some confusion may occur.”

“Ah, I see.”

Chiho was glad that her friend wouldn’t be leaving anytime soon. But on the other hand, she couldn’t be completely happy that a woman would be staying next door to Maou for an extended period of time, especially since said woman considered him her mortal enemy.

“Well, we wouldn’t have to do any of this if I just cut this beggar demon king down.”

Emi smiled mischievously and looked at Maou, as if she was reading Chiho’s thoughts.

Maou broke into a cold sweats and Chiho also wondered for a moment if Emi was being serious.

However,

“...Well, I said some time ago that I wouldn’t do that, and besides, it’s better if she stays here while we come up with a good solution that’ll satisfy all of us, right?”

“Ye-yes.”

Chiho replied in a monotonous voice as she realized that Emi was being serious.

“Ahaha, sorry, sorry. It’s okay. I won’t do something like that in front of you, Chiho-chan.”

“It’s when you’re not in front of me that i’m worried about, though...”

Chiho finally smiled, albeit nervously.

“That will depend on the demon king’s heart.”

“Humph. You’ll never meet such an eco-friendly, subject-minded, hardworking demon king anywhere else! And I couldn’t care less about your little secret transaction! So stop worrying and get out of my face!”

Maou shooed Emi away, as if he were a sulking child.

“Are you not remotely embarrassed to be accepted by your mortal enemy as an eco-friendly, subject-minded, hard-working demon king?”

“I’m aiming to be a demon king with universal appeal who won’t bring shame upon anyone!”

“Yeah, but if Ente Isla could see you now, they’d be completely ashamed that they struggled so fiercely against your army.”

Emi shrugged in indifference.

“...But what are you doing? Making a fire when it’s already this hot outside?”

She tilted her head as she looked at the nearly burnt-out ogara in the horoku next to her feet.

“I saw smoke on the way here, and I thought something was burning.”

“Uuuuh...”

“Um...”

“Emilia, are you really not aware of what this is?”

This time, Maou, Chiho, and Suzuno glanced at each other unintentionally. “Come on... you can’t be like that. That’s why people say stuff like ‘youngsters these days,’ you know?”

“...I’m sorry, Yusa-san... there’s nothing I can say back to him.”

“Very well. I will instruct you on it at a later time.”

“What? ...Whaat?”

Emi was taken completely off-guard by the sudden change of position and could not understand what landmine she could have tripped, as not only Maou, but even Chiho and Suzuno reacted in an unpredictable way.

“Regardless, Emilia, I receive this with gratitude. If you would be so kind as to wait for me, I will be ready in a moment.”

Suzuno took the paper bag, thanked Emi, and began to walk upstairs.

Emi looked at Suzuno and the nearly burnt-out ogara, still not understanding what she had done wrong.. Chiho made an ambiguous smile to break the awkward atmosphere, and the last bit of ogara finally burnt out, causing the trail of smoke that had been rising from it to disappear It was at that precise moment.

“Wha?”

“Huh?”

“What!?”

“Kyah!”

“Wh-wh-whoa!”

Maou, Chiho, Suzuno, Emi, and even Urushihara, who had been sticking his head out of the door, let out shouts of surprise at the light.

The light was not the blazing sun that was beating down from the sky like a sharp sword, but rather an explosion of light with actual mass that appeared out of nowhere on top of the burnt-out ogara.

“Crap!”

The one who moved quickly was Maou.

“Hyah!”

Maou cried out as he tightly held onto Chiho, who had been standing closest to the horoku, and ran away from the source of light while carrying her to the tree in the backyard.

Maou groaned at the blinding torrent of light, and then shouted,

“Grab onto of something! It’s a Gate!”

“!!”

“What did you say!?”

Emi and Suzuno reacted quickly, dropping everything they were holding, and held onto the stair handrails with both hands.

The heavy paper bag fell from the stairs as Suzuno let it drop from her hands, and it crashed and made a heavy sound.

As an opening to an alternate world, Gates and their properties depended on the nature of the user’s power and their purpose for creating it.

However, a trait that all gates shared was that if the gate’s capacity allowed for it, whatever touched it would be sucked into it.

And in this unexpected situation, the person who was in the greatest danger was Chiho, who had no supernatural demonic or sacred powers.

“Hey, which is it, in or out?”

Maou shouted, his hands full just trying to cover Chiho.

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“Something is coming through!”

Suzuno shouted back, but she could not see exactly what was coming through.

An outwards Gate. In other words, someone was coming to Japan from somewhere through the Gate.

Upon realizing that the Gate wasn't going to suck in whatever was around it, Maou let go of Chiho and stood in front of her, squinting into the blinding light.

“...What is that?”

He saw a large, round shadow appear in the center of the light.

“it-it doesn't look like it's a human or a demon!”

Emi was also able to see the round shadow.

As soon as the shadow appeared, the light suddenly started fading rapidly.

To be more precise, it was still extremely bright because of the midsummer sun. The torrent of light from the Gate ceased, and the details of the round shadow could now be seen.

“It’s a fruit... but more importantly...”

“It’s huge...”

Suzuno and Emi, who were closer to the gate than Maou, crept up to the light slowly.

And as if a water faucet was being turned off, the rest of the light from the gate disappeared in an instant.

In that moment, their surroundings returned to their normal colors, and the summer sun returned to the backyard of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

Maou and the others watched as the object that had appeared for no apparent reason fell with a thud onto the ogara ashes.

“Hey, hey, hey, hey!”

“Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no!”

“Noo! Maan...”

Rather than the mysteriousness of the object, it was the fact that it had fallen on the ashes that spurred the three lower middle-class citizens into action.

Maou picked it up, Emi moved it away with her feet, and Suzuno quickly took out her handkerchief and wiped the part that had been dirtied by the ashes..

Luckily, the ogara had completely burnt out, and there was no trace of the fruit having been damaged by high temperatures.

And when the three let out a sigh,

“My eyes! My eyees!”

Urushihara seemed to have gotten a great amount of the light in his eyes. Maou, Emi, and Suzuno were snapped back to reality as the sound of Urushihara’s cry entered their ears.

The three of them looked at each other instinctively, and then looked at the object that Maou was holding and Suzuno was wiping.

“What are you babbling about, Urushihara!?”

“My eeeyes! Gah!”

“Hey, stop loafing around over there. Someone will kick and trip over you.”

“Do-don’t say that after kicking me!”

“It’s your fault for lying down by the doorway! ...My lord, what’s going on? What is that large fruit?”

However, the three who stood in the backyard could not analyze the situation calmly until Ashiya asked them lackadaisically from upstairs.

The fruit was so gigantic that Maou, an average sized man, had to use both of his arms to hold it up, as if he were hugging it.

It was a heavy, golden, apple-shaped fruit.

If they filed for an application for the Guinness Book of World Records, they probably would have shattered any previous records immediately, but they did not even think of eating it.

“Is... it... actually an apple?”

“It could also be a pear... however...”

“...There’s no apple this huge in the demon world either. Don’t tell me this is an apple-shaped demon.”

There are demons that camouflage themselves as plants in the demon world. However, they were usually human-shaped and changed their appearance to something along the lines of trees, and demons that shapeshifted to gigantic, round apples were unheard of.

“If it only came with a return address like Sasuke Express\*...”

Maou grumbled, having no idea what to do with the fruit.

\*Sasuke Express is a spoof on Sagawa Express, a shipping service company. The “Sa” in Sasuke and Sagawa share the same kanji.

A Gate couldn’t open on its own, so there had to be a user that opened it.

There was no way of knowing who was behind this now, but the situation could change drastically depending on whether it was sent here specifically or by accident.

“Give me a break.”

The first to change her thought was Emi.

“Just how many times are these ‘incidents’ going to happen in the general vicinity of the hero and the demon king? That whole thing with Sariel was just a little over a week ago!! Seriously, nothing good ever comes of being around you!”

“I could say the exact same thing about you!”

Maou could not stay silent as he was made out to be some type of troublemaker.

“Speak for yourself! The source of all our recent chaos was you humans!”

“Ugh...”

“Well, um, we deeply regret that.”

Emi could not find any words to form a counterargument, and Suzuno mumbled apologies while avoiding eye contact.

“And no matter how you look at it, there’s no way a demon could open a gate that gives off that much light! I’m sure it was someone from Heaven! Here, take it! Chill it in your fridge and eat it or something!”

Maou added and thrusted the apple at Emi, who took a step back in surprise.

“No way! We’re about to go into the city to go shopping! How in the world are we supposed to carry something that big around with us!?”

“Like I give a damn about your convenience! You’re the one always stalking us whenever you want! You stalker hero!”

“Who-who are you calling a stalker!? Who’d spend so much time on you if you weren’t the demon king!? You beggar demon king!”

“Shu-shut up! Dressing up all nice in this suffocating heat! You office lady hero!”

“Humph! At least I’m not wearing the same faded, cheap, plain white shirt every day, you t-shirt demon king!”

The verbal exchanges kept escalating, and somewhere in it, it became unclear whether they were trying to insult each other or just spout nonsense about each other’s lifestyle. In the midst of it all, Maou finally uttered the irrevocable words;

“A cheap, plain white sports bra is good enough for you, you chopping board hero!”

Suddenly, Emi's eyes, which had grown weary from the bickering and the summer heat, lit up and displayed a newfound, malicious will to fight.

“That’s it! I’m cutting you down right here, right now!”

“Huh-wha-wa-wait, Emi! Someone will see us! Hey, no holy sword! We can talk about this!”

“I’m not listening to any of your excuses!! My power exists to vanquish evil!!”

Sacred power which manifested itself as an golden aura came forth from her right hand, and her holy sword, Better Half, materialized.

Also known as evolving heavenly silver, and safeguarded by The Church of the Divine Creed since ancient times, the holy, evil-slaying sword rested within the hero’s body, and only she could wield it.

“Wh-wh-wh-whoa! A-are you serious, Emi!?”

“My Lord!”

Since Emi drew her holy sword, Ashiya could no longer just sit back and watch their bickering as usual and tried to run down the stairs, and—

“Zwhaaaaaa!?”

Since he had come outside wearing slippers, he completely lost his footing and fell all the way down the stairs, letting out an incredible scream.

“Wow, you’re such a klutz, Aishiya.”

Meanwhile, Urushihara’s eyes had recovered from being blinded by the light, and he was lying by the doorway, watching everything. And then,

“Huh? Where’s Chiho Sasaki?”

He noticed that Chiho was not taking part in the ruckus at all and began looking around for her. Soon enough, he found Chiho dazed underneath the cicada-filled tree, and tilted his head in confusion.

“Very well. You have my permission. Cut him down.”

For unknown reasons, Suzuno also glared at Maou with a face full of fury.

“Hey, don’t say something disturbing so casually! Help me out here! Wait, you’re on Emi’s side!

Damn it!”

“Demon King! Prepare yourself!”

He could not believe that his ambition to conquer the world would end because of a white sports bra.

What ran through Maou’s mind was not a replay of his entire lift, but rather a ridiculous, almost comical regret.

Without a chance of dodging Emi’s lightning-fast strike and having no other choice, Maou shielded himself from the holy sword bearing down on him from above with the apple, even though he knew it was useless.

“What?”

However, the blade of the holy sword that divided the heavens and obliterated the ground never split Maou’s body in half, no matter how long he waited.

Maou raised his head slowly and fearfully, and...

“...”

He saw Emi, staring with wide eyes at the apple between the holy sword and Maou.

Maou had no idea what was going on, and couldn't move regardless. In place of him,

“My... My Lord... ugh...”

Having finally recovered from his free fall, Ashiya saw what had happened.

His lord, using the apple to shield himself. Crestia Bell, with her hands to her face, shocked at something. Emilia, who had struck with her holy sword.

And...

“...A hand?”

What Ashiya saw was a hand coming out from the apple.

A human baby's feet and a hand had sprouted from the huge round apple.

“Wha-”

“Wha-”

“What the heck is this!?”

Ashiya and Suzuno blurted out, and Emi yelled.

If it had just been that an arm had grown out of the apple, then it might have been a surprise, but it would just have meant that it was a plant-shaped demon.

However, the issue was that this baby hand had stopped the blade of Emi's holy sword dead in its tracks.

By no means had Emi held back or hesitated with her strike.

She had had every intention of splitting Maou in half from head to toe along with the apple in one slash. Since she had acted out of pure rage, she couldn't be sure if that would have actually happened, but the force of her blade should have at least cut the apple in two.

Emi stepped back quickly in surprise, and Suzuno took her hairpin out of her hair at the same time.

“Materialization War Art: Iron Light!”

At Suzuno's command, the cross-shaped, glass hairpin became a gigantic, sacred hammer. Suzuno and Emi both prepared themselves against the unknown enemy.

Ashiya also finally stood up, and began thinking of possible courses of action.

However, even as the former commander of the Eastern Ente Islan Continent Invasion Army, considered the most cunning general of the Demon Army, he had not had the experience necessary to prepare him for a situation involving a holy sword-wielding hero and an apple that grew limbs being on top of the demon king.

Suzuno drew her weapon, but she was also at a loss as to what to do. She held her hammer and did not move a muscle.

“...Wha-what? What happened?”

Maou could not see the top of the apple, but he looked around in fear and confusion with the apple still in his arms.

“Ma-Maou?”

The one to break the silence was Urushihara, who was watching everything from the common hallway upstairs.

“Fo-for now, why don’t you put down the apple, upside down?”

“Put down the apple...? What the!? The hell is this!?”

Maou was about to put down the apple as Urushihara suggested, but upon seeing the baby hands that were growing out of it, which were moving around as if asking for something, he threw it on the ground in shock.

“Whoa!”

Changing their stance from their instinctive reaction to attack the unknown object, the group let out a cautionary cry and stared at the rolling apple.

“Wh-wha?”

Emi, who happened to be in the direction of where Maou had thrown the apple down, jumped out of the way with an exaggerated motion.

However, the apple began rolling towards Emi furiously at a speed that was far beyond what the inertia from Maou’s throw should have given it.

“Whaaaaaa!? What the heck is this!?”

Spinning its tiny hands round and round like propellers, the apple chased Emi around the yard. Neither Maou or Suzuno had any idea what to do, so they just stood and stared at the peculiar situation.

Possibly due to losing its momentum, the apple came to a rest in the middle of the yard. As if she were a mouse cornered by a cat, Emi leaned on to the cinder block wall that surrounded the yard, completely out of breath.

However, the apple still did not give up. It extended its two hands straight towards Emi as if it wanted her, and began waving then up and down.

“He-hey, no matter how you look at it, it wants you, Emi.”

“Wheeze... wheeze... wha-what? Ew, I don’t want that.”

Even though her intent to kill Maou had disappeared, Emi could only stare in bewilderment at the absolutely ridiculous situation. She repeatedly look back and forth between the holy sword in her right hand and the hands that were extended toward her.

The hands of the apple that had stopped the blade of the holy sword which had swung with all her power.

Or rather, to be more precise, it had stopped by some kind of a buffering force, much like when water was struck by an open palm.

Emi began thinking that the number of people or things that the holy sword wouldn't work against had been increasing lately. If the apple was also unaffected by the holy sword, then it was very possible that it was somehow related to Heaven, much like Sariel, who came to steal the holy sword.

Once Emi reached the end of that train of thought, she returned the holy sword to her body as a precaution.

The next change happened at that moment.

At the instant that Emi put away the sword, the hands which were waving up and down suddenly fell limp, as if they had lost all strength.

Upon seeing something like a puppet that had suddenly had its strings cut, Emi cowered and let out a short scream.

“Ew! Wha-what is it now!?”

The change was something similar to an apple being peeled.

The yellow skin unraveled like a belt.

It seemed that the outer skin was a hardened shell to protect whatever was inside, and underneath it was empty space.



As everyone except Chiho watched, the armed apple then...

“...apshoo!”

...became a baby girl, and let out an innocent sneeze that echoed across Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...”

Everyone just stood speechless as they stared at the peculiar, unexpected turn of events. They could not even look at each other, as their eyes were glued to the baby that had come out of an apple.

“...apshoo!”

As if responding to the second sneeze, the unraveled skin floated into air again and slowly began changing its shape, eventually becoming a yellow, one-piece dress as it had been its original form.

“Huh?”

In the brief instant during which the dress was formed, a mark appeared on the little girl’s forehead, but only Maou noticed it. It was a purple, crescent moon-shaped mark.

“Ooh.”

However, it disappeared in an instant.

For a little while, the little girl patted her forehead where the mark had been. She then made one of her hands which had stopped the holy sword dead in its tracks into a fist, looked around, frowned slightly, and tiredly rubbed her eyes.

After spacing out briefly, she laid sideways on the ground.

“...spuuu...”

And fell asleep.

The ruler of the demon world, the demon king. The hero who had the blood of an angel coursing through her veins. The great demon general. A member of the clergy of the Church of the Divine Creed. And a fallen angel.

None of these people from theunbelievable birthplace of an alternate world could react to what had just happened right in front of them.

“He-hey!!”

Impressively, the first to get their senses back was Maou.

“Wha-wha-wha-wha-what is- what is...”

However, he had not completely snapped out of his confusion, and could not talk coherently.

“Ho-how should- how should I know!?”

The same could be said of Emi.

“Ma-Maou!”

The alarmed voice came from Urushihara, who had the highest point of view.

Suzuno and Ashiya jerked and looked up at Urushihara as if his voice had been a clap of thunder.

Urushihara was looking down the road that ran towards Sasazuka Station.

“Not good! There are people coming!”

That statement instantly snapped them all back to reality.

In other words, regardless of who the little apple girl was or whether the light from the gate had been seen, they could not afford to attract any more attention.

“He-hey, Emi!”

“Wh-what!”

“Thi-this-this girl? Is it even a girl? Anyway, bring her upstairs!”

“Wh-why me!?”

“Sh-she’s a girl, so a girl like you should carry her! I’ve never even held a human baby before!”

“I never have either! Well, I have picked up a baby before, but I’ve never held a sleeping baby like this.”

“Ugh! You are pathetic, both of you! Demon King! Hero!”

The one to take action was Suzuno.

Ignoring the rest of the surprised group, who were treating the peacefully sleeping little apple girl as if she were an paranormal object, Suzuno picked her up gently without waking her, as if she had done so countless times. “Oh, impressive.”

“We clergy learn how to handle babies for baptism ceremonies! Alciel! I am taking her up to

Demon King Castle! Take out the futon! The futon!”

“Do-don’t give me orders, Crestia! O-owowow...”

Even while bickering back at her, Ashiya pulled up his aching body and headed straight up the stairs.

Suzuno followed him, took off her traditional sandals off, and climbed the dusty stairs in her white, traditional socks.

“Hey, Emi! You come up, too! Suzuno, why did you take your sandals off!? Take them with you!”

“It’s so she won’t slip! Wait, Bell! Here! The paper bag!”

Emi picked up her and Suzuno’s belongings that they had dropped when the gate opened, and followed the others upstairs, barely squeezing through the door.

“Hold on, Chii-chan? Where’s Chii-chan? I haven’t seen... huh?”

Maou finally realized that Chiho was nowhere to be seen in the midst of the supernatural event. The ominous feeling that Chiho might have been affected by the torrent of light from the gate because she had no resistance against demonic or holy powers ran through Maou’s head.

However, upon a closer look, her cheeks were rosy and a happy smile floated on her face, with an expression like she was seeing a good dream.

“He-heey, Chii-chan?”

“...eld me...”

“Huh?”

He couldn't make out what she was, so he drew closer.

“...held me, Maou-san held me. Ehehe, held...”

She whispered with a blissful smile on her face and held her hand up to her mouth.

“...Uuuuuh...”

Maou let out a small groan as he frowned a bit, and then,

“Hoi!”

“Kyah!”

He let out a short yell and clapped his hands right in front of Chiho's face.

The sound brought Chiho back to her senses, and she looked around quickly.

“Is anyone home? Chii-chan!”

“Hyah! Ma-Maou-san! Uh-I-I-I was!”

“It’s okay, sorry, but now’s not the time! We have to get back into Demon King Castle!”

“Huh? Wha-wha-wha! Ma-Maou-san, hand, my hand!”

Not giving Chiho enough time to completely recover from her confusion, Maou pulled her upstairs by the hand.

When all was said and done and they were all back inside Demon King Castle, everyone was completely wiped out for one reason or another.

□ □ □

A group of people from an alternate world and a high school girl stuffed their faces with ice cream in silence beside the little apple girl, who slept in blissful peace on top of a bath sheet that Ashiya had laid out.

To be more precise, Chiho did not eat much of her ice cream, but the other five kept eating theirs to escape from reality.

Emi finished her ice cream first, and,

“...Okay, we’ll be taking off now...”

“Hey! Stop right there!”

She tried to get up and escape, but Maou stopped her by holding onto her foot.

“Hey! Don’t grab my feet!”

She tried to shake him off, but...

“Shhhhh! You will wake her up, Emilia!”

Suzuno put her index finger over her lips and whispered.

Emi soured her expression and lowered her foot. However,

“...Bell and I have nothing to do with this! You do something about it!”

“As if! No matter how you look at it, she came for you!”

They argued with each other in whispers.

The apple had undoubtedly charged after Emi and extended its arms toward her before it had become a little girl. Whether that was because it was reacting to her holy power or Emi had simply been standing in the direction where its arms had been extended was unclear, but considering the the timing of her arrival, which was exactly when Emi had materialized her sword, the former seemed more likely.

“You take her back, or at the very least stay here until we know what’s going on!”

“No way! If this has something to do with me, then there’s no doubt it’ll be nothing but trouble! I’m getting out of here as soon as I can!”

“Held... my hand...”

Beside the arguing Maou and Emi, Chiho was still spaced out.

“I should have said this ages ago, but I’m sick of getting dragged into all your troubles!”

“What? So are you saying you’re going to solve all my problems?”

“Yeah, right! I’m saying that you should learn how to wipe your own ass!”

“Ew! And if I could, I would! But I have no control over any of this! It’s not my responsibility!”

“Come on! You...”

“Be quiet! She’ll wake up!”

Ashiya warned them in a whisper, but their voices kept escalating as they tried to shift the responsibility onto each other.

“He held me, Maou-san’s hand, it was so big...”

“...What happened to Chiho-dono...?”

“She’s been like this for a while.”

“Silence, Lucifer. I was not asking you.”

Suzuno saw that everyone aside from Ashiya, who was trying to calm the bickering pair down, was going to be useless, and moaned as she put her hand on her forehead.

“Didn’t this happen because you made some weird bonfire!? You must have summoned it, just like back at Tanabata!”

“How would I know!? And besides, what do you mean, ‘back at Tanabata?’

Don’t criticize me when you don’t even know what a welcoming fire is! It’s a Japanese ritual, and has nothing to do with us!”

“See! It was you who summoned it! Your leftover demonic powers must have gotten mixed with a

Japanese ritual again! If you summoned it, you take responsibility!”

“What do you mean, ‘leftover?’ Call it ‘strategically put aside!’ Stop complaining and contribute to solving the problem every once in a while!”

“What!? You make it sound like I never do anything!”

“But you always just go with the flow and never do anything!”

“What did you say!?”

“Bring it!”

“I already told you two, be quiet!”

Aiming for the heads of the demon king and hero, who were completely lost in their extremely immature argument, Suzuno brought down the hammer she had summoned.

Neither Ashiya nor Urushihara could stop her.

“Uh-um-sorry!”

“No, wait, you’ve gotta be kidding m-agh!”

The hammer only hit Maou, who was taller than Emi.

She held back and didn’t put any force into it, but even an ordinary hammer to the head could cause an injury. Maou nearly teared up at the pain, and glared up at Suzuno, but...

“Oou.. Afu.”

A small yawn and a shuffling sound stopped everyone in their tracks.

The little apple girl sat up, and rubbed her eyes as she yawned. After rubbing her eyes for a bit, the little girl looked around, and stopped and looked at Maou.

“He... hey.”

Maou tried talking to the weary-eyed girl.

“Oou?”

He had no idea whether she could understand him, but figured she'd at least know that he was trying to talk to her.

“...goo' monin.”

However, defying all expectations, the little girl spoke not with an Idea Link, as Maou and Emi had when they had just arrived in Japan, but in perfectly normal Japanese.

“Yo-you can speak Japanese?”

Maou had no idea how the mysterious little apple girl who had arrived through a gate could speak Japanese. He crept up slowly so as not to scare her, and asked her that question. “ah wittle.”

“A little? Okay. I see.”

Maou nodded awkwardly and turned around in search of help from others, but Emi, Suzuno, Ashiya, and Urushihara just held silent expressions that told him to keep going.

It wasn't what Maou had wanted, but he mustered his courage and asked the little apple girl a question.

“Um, what exactly are you?”

“Fu?”

The little apple girl looked back with big, blank eyes, as if she did not understand the question.

Regaining his composure after realizing his mistake,

“I mean, um, name, yeah, what's your name?”

Maou turned to his experience from work, and asked as if she was a little child that a customer had brought.

This time, the little girl made an expression that showed she understood the question, gave a small yawn, and answered,

“Alas Ramus.”

“Alas Ramus?”

“Mh. Alas Ramus. Apsho!”

This time, a little sneeze. As if that had woken her up, she opened her halfshut eyes all the way and suddenly began looking around quickly.

“Wah!”

Urushihara jumped at her sudden change, but Maou, who was somewhat used to children’s sudden changes in behavior, was able to keep his composure.

Because of that, he was finally able to achieve a mental state where he could observe the little girl who called herself Alas Ramus.

From a human viewpoint, she looked to be about one or two years old. Her extraordinarily bright silver hair could almost reflect sunlight, but one bunch of hair was shaded violet; the same color as her eyes.

Maou was particularly bothered by something and looked at her forehead for a moment, but there was nothing there. Putting that matter aside, he continued to question her.

“Alas Ramus, where did you come from?”

“Ah, Yes... od?”

After having some difficulty thinking, she gave an unsure answer that sounded like a word.

“Yes...? No, I wasn’t asking for a yes or no. Where’s your home?”

“home... home? Ah donno.”

“I-I see...”

Maou carefully thought about other questions he could ask.

“...Do you have a mother and a father?”

“ma, fa?”

Perhaps the words were too long, or perhaps she just couldn’t understand them. Alas Ramus shook her head as if she was stumped.

“I just want you to tell me about your mommy and daddy, Alas Ramus.”

She might be mysterious, but she has the appearance of a human child. It seemed reasonable to ask her about her parents, as long as her answer...

“daddy is... Satan.”

...wasn’t something like that.

The eyes of the entire group bored holes into Maou’s back.

“I see... so your daddy is Satan... huh?”

Realizing what that answer meant, Maou turned around and faced the others.

“...Wait, me?”

“She...”

“Definitely said...”

“Daddy is Satan...”

“Right...?”

“Ma-Maou-san!?”

Chiho, who had been in a blissful, dream-like state until that moment, suddenly snapped out of it and started to interrogate Maou.

“Ma-Ma-Maou-san, you had a child!?”

“Wa-wa-wait, a second, Chii-chan!”

“Did-did you actually have a wife or children when you were the demon king!?”

“No! No I didn’t, calm down! I never had any!”

“My-my Lord, are you speaking the truth!?”

“Hey! Why are you on her side, Ashiya!?”

“If you had a secret child, the news would shake the demon world! As the future heir, she needs specialized education! The best we have to offer! Why

did you keep her hidden from me for this long, after she has grown this much, my lord!?”

“Wait! Why are you already assuming she’s my child!?”

“Tha-that’s right, who is your secret demon mistress? Since the demon army was mostly male demons, was this before we invaded Ente Isla!?”

“I said, she’s not mine!! ...Huh?”

As Maou was sandwiched by the double interrogation of Chiho and Ashiya, Alas Ramus made her way out of the towel sheet,

“oof, umf.”

put her small hands on the tatami, took an uneasy foothold, and put a brave expression on her innocent face as she got up slowly.

From that, they determined that she was at an age where she could stand, but that was the least of their worries at the moment.

Alas Ramus gave it her all, swinging her arms and legs to clear the great distance of half a tatami mat to reach Maou.

Seeing such an adorable sight, the entire group's face softened for a moment, but in the midst of such a tense atmosphere, Alas Ramus took Maou's hand and breathed through her nostrils as if she were smelling him.

“...daddy!”

With a smile that stretched across her entire face, she grabbed onto Maou.

The tension in the air in that precise moment was excruciatingly difficult to describe.

Chiho and Ashiya's faces twitched and their mouths opened and closed silently as if they were goldfish gasping for oxygen, Urushihara retreated to the corner of the room to escape from any possible collateral damage, and Emi and Suzuno just stood silently, having no idea what to do. And of course, the most dismayed of them all was Maou, who had just become a father.

“Wa-wait! How in the world did you decide that I'm your dad!?”

“Daddyy!”

“Come on! Stop saying stuff that'll just throw more dynamite into the volcano!!”

The gears in Maou's head began spinning at an incredible rate as he tried to think of anything that would pacify the pale-faced Chiho and Ashiya, resulting in him thinking of a question.

“Tha-that’s right! Mommy! Who’s your mommy!?”

Alas Ramus gave Maou a big, blank stare.

Maou was trying to prove his innocence by showing that her mother was someone he didn’t know.

Alas Ramus' appearance was that of a one-to-two year-old. That timeframe would place her conception right around his battle with the hero Emilia. Ashiya should understand that Maou had no time to be fooling around with a demoness back then.

“Mommy!”

But Alas Ramus answered Maou’s question right away, without having to repeat it this time. At the same time she replied, “mommy,” she pointed the index finger of her tiny hand without a shred of doubt.

Everyone realized that she could already point with her finger, which was again the least of their problems, and the group turned to look at what she was pointing at.

“...Huh?”

In the direction of her pointed finger was Emi..

“...M...m-m-m-m...me?”

The blood drained out of Emi’s face faster than anyone else’s there.

The air in Demon King Castle was completely frozen, even though it was the middle of summer.

As if hammering the final nail into the coffin,

“Daddy! Mommy!”

Alas Ramus pointed to Maou and Emi clearly, in that order.

The stupefied Maou and Emi had no idea what was happening. And then...

“...huuurgh...”

“Waaaaah! Ashiya! Pull yourself together! Are you alright!?”

Right then and there, Ashiya passed out and fell, causing Urushihara to run over to help him up.

“Yu-Yu-Yu-Yusa-Yusasasa-Yusa-san?”

Chiho crushed the not-yet-empty ice cream cup in her hand.

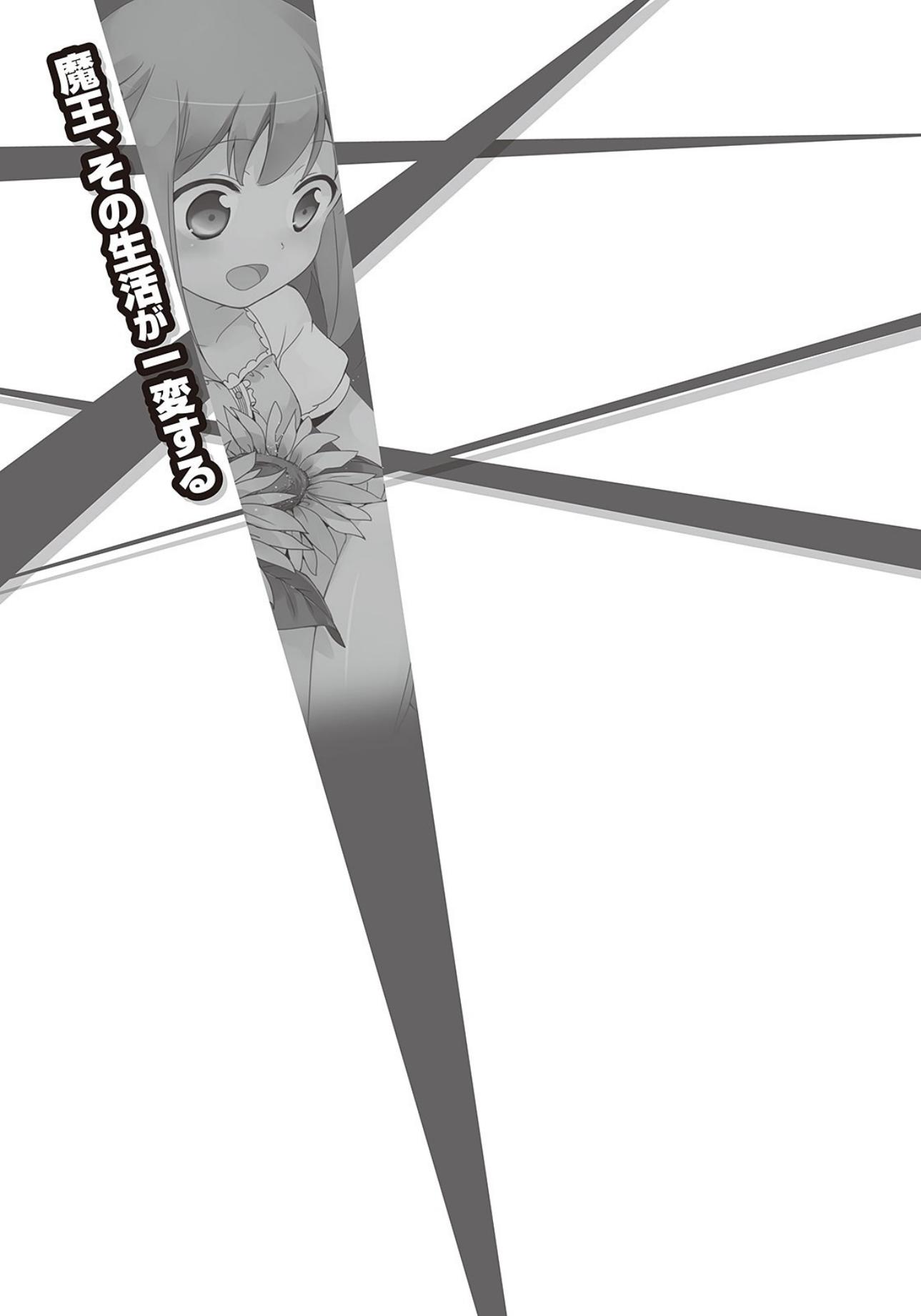
“The father is the demon king, and the mother is the hero? This is beyond world-shattering...”

Suzuno’s words symbolized the chaos that was to ensue.

And while the adults were caught up in the whirlwind, Alas Ramus, the little apple girl, happily ran in a figure eight around “Mommy” and “Daddy.”

## **Chapter 2: The Demon King's Daily Life is Turned Upside Down**

魔王、やの出で戻が一級かる



The afternoon of the day after Demon King Castle was thrown into chaos.

After peeking inside for a moment, Chiho quietly knocked on the door to Unit 201 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

She could hear a shuffling sound from inside, drawing closer to the door.

“Ashiya-san?”

After she called from outside, the sound of the door unlocking was heard and Ashiya, who had large bags under his eyes, stuck his face out.

“...Hello... thank you for coming, Sasaki-san...”

His voice was full of fatigue, and there was not a trace of his usual energy and ambition.

“Is everything alright now?”

“...She just went to sleep a moment ago... anyway, please come inside.”

“Yes, excuse me.”

The two of them lowered their voices and closed the door to the apartment with the utmost care, so as not to make too much noise.

Once Chiho took off her shoes and came inside, she put down what she was carrying instead of heading further in right away.

The noise that the vinyl bags rubbing against each other made sounded like an explosion. As Ashiya hurried to get in between the bags to stop the noise, a motorcycle flew by right outside the apartment.

Ashiya and Chiho held their breaths and froze, then turned around simultaneously to look at Alas Ramus, who was taking a nap under the shadow of a bamboo screen.

They both let out a sigh of relief as she kept sleeping without stirring at all. However, their expressions immediately grew serious again.

“These are... all the things I bought that I thought would be useful.”

Chiho brought out the contents of the bag, making sure not to make any loud noises.

“Baby formula, sugar-free yogurt, and some microwaveable baby food that you can try... what did you do for her dinner last night?”

“We cut up some udon that we received from Crestia and boiled it together with eggs and fish cakes until it was all soft, and she ate it willingly. She has no problems chewing, either. She drank water too, so she seems okay with eating human food.”

Chiho nodded, and took some more items out.

“Here are some baby wipes for when she has an accident, and this is a children’s toothbrush. Please don’t use any toothpaste since she can’t spit it out yet. And here is some bottled mineral water.”

“Toothbrush... that’s right, she didn’t brush her teeth last night... and what are these small water bottles? Are they different from the mineral water?”

“That’s called oral hydration solution.”

Ashiya blinked his tired eyes at the strange words that he had never heard before.

“It’s really hot right now, right? If she gets dehydrated, she can drink this to get back her sodium and sugar content along with water. Just think of it as a baby sports drink.”

“How is it different from an ordinary version?”

“It’s made in a way that won’t stress a child’s body. You can make it from normal tap water too, but you don’t have a water filter here, right?”

Chiho turned her eyes to Demon King’s Castle’s sink, which had a silvercolored faucet.

“Tokyo’s water quality has improved from what it was before, but that doesn’t mean anything if the house or apartment’s water pipes are old... I thought it would be better to use cleaner water for her whenever possible, especially since she came out of an apple. Also, this is only for emergencies, so make sure this isn’t the only thing you give her to drink.”

“...I see.”

Ashiya nodded, impressed by Chiho’s expertise.

“And use this when you give her drinks.”

Next to come out of the bag was a plastic cup with a lid, which had a straw sticking out of the middle.

“This has a cover inside the straw, so it won’t spill even if you knock it over. Since she can already talk that much, her sucking strength should be pretty good, so this will be fine for her... oh, are there straws in Ente Isla?”

“There are... I think, but since they’re a human invention... Emilia or Crestia should know...”

“If Alas Ramus-chan doesn’t know how to use a straw, please use this.” Next, Chiho took out some drink cartons that read, “Barley Tea for Children.”

“Does it really matter whether barley tea is for children or not?”

“Yes, it does. Ordinary barley tea, whether it’s cold or hot, will taste bitter if you don’t make it well. But anyway, it’s not so much the content of these cartons that is important, but that the cartons themselves are perfect for practicing.”

“Practicing using straws?”

“Yes. To help the baby understand that if you suck on it, a drink will come out, an adult can squeeze the carton gently to send some up the straw. Then the baby will stop trying to resist using the straw, and start sucking on it on their own.”

“...”

Ashiya was on the verge of tears as he listened to Chiho.

“And these are all diapers!”

Chiho handed over diapers of all shapes and sizes. The type that could slip on like pants; the traditional type that was fastened with tape; diapers of one type after another was taken out of the bag.

“Please try them all one after another, and see which kind is the best for her.”

As he took the diapers that were handed to him, Ashiya could no longer contain his emotions and buried his face in his hands.

“You... you’ve aided us all this time, in so many different ways... I, Ashiya, don’t even have the words to thank you with...”

“Please, you’re exaggerating.”

“No... if you so desire, Sasaki-san, I would even go as far as to say that once my lord has taken over Japan and formed the new demon army, I would like for you to be an arch-general!”

“I will have to decline that, thank you.”

Chiho pondered for a second whether it was really alright for the demon army that planned to take over the world to make someone a general just for offering baby advice and goods.

Even though she had nothing to do with that, she still worried for them.

“Besides, Maou-san was the one who gave me the money to buy all these things, and what I did was more or less just small errands for you. Oh, and here are the change and receipt. Please give these to Maou-san.”

“...Yes, yes... I, Ashiya, shall deliver them even if it costs me my life...!”

Chiho smiled awkwardly, as she wasn’t quite sure how to react to someone putting their life on the line for some change and a receipt, and added,

“Besides, it was fun for me.”

She looked at Alas Ramus, who had been sleeping peacefully without stirring ever since Chiho had come in.

“My cousin on my father’s side got married recently, and they already have a child. Whenever I visit them, I play with and help take care of their child, so I’ve learned a lot from his wife about how to take care of a baby.”

“...I see...”

“Besides, besides, um,”

Chiho made an expression that somewhat resembled being nostalgic, but clenching her left hand and blushing in her cheeks, she mumbled,

“If I can someday... with Maou-san... wouldn’t that be...”

“Um, Sasaki-san?”

“Huh? Um, um, um, no-no-no-nothing! It’s nothing!”

Chiho shook her bright-red face and waved her hands in the air all at once. She then realized something, and asked Ashiya,

“Where did Urushihara-san go?”

Urushihara the ultra-NEET, Debt Generator and Budget Destroyer of Demon King Castle, who had lost both his title as an angel and all sense of consideration for others, was nowhere to be found.

In fact, the laptop was missing from the desk that he always sat in front of.

“Did he run away?”

Knowing Urushihara’s character, positive reasons such as going out to work or to do grocery shopping could not possibly be the case. In the first place, he wasn’t exactly in a position where he could just walk around in public.

“Humph... if he had any resolve, I wouldn’t be this tired in the first place.”

Ashiya frowned and criticized Urushihara under his breath, then let out a great sigh.

“...As you guessed, Alas Ramus’s crying and energy last night were beyond what any of us could have imagined.”

Unlike the cries of a newborn baby, those of one who had learned to speak somewhat and realized the effect that had on its surroundings usually indicated that they had some kind of need to be met.

Chiho had had some prior family commitment and had to leave for home in the evening, so did not know what had happened afterwards.

She tried to remember what had happened before she left.

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Alas Ramus's speech development was much farther along than her apparent age would suggest.

Alas Ramus, who had said, "Daddy is Satan," then pointed to Emi and called her "Mommy."

However, just like Maou had denied everything, Emi also denied being the mother after recovering from the initial shock.

Of course, the other four had been just as shocked at first, but none of them seriously thought that there had been some sort of "mistake" between Maou and Emi. The demon king and hero mixed even less than oil and water, and repulsed each other more than similar polarities of magnets. Alas Ramus's apparent age also suggested that it couldn't be the case, and obviously, the two had no recollection of having done anything of the sort, nor any desire to do so.

However, predictably, denying their parenthood made Alas Ramus cry as if she had been set on fire.

"Hey! There, there, Alas Ramus. You do have a mommy and a daddy. But she and I aren't your pare—"

"WAAAAAAAH NOOOO! SATAN IZ MAI DADDIIIEEE!!!"

Since she cried and screamed at the top of her lungs with her tiny mouth, her words were barely intelligible.

“Man... what are we supposed to do?”

“...”

“Hey, Emi...”

“...”

“...Hah!”

“Kyah!”

Maou clapped right in front of Emi’s face as she just stood there with a blank expression, completely at a loss as to what she should do.

Caught by surprise, Emi fell down on her butt and Suzuno hurried over to her to help her up, but—

“MOOOMMMYYYYYY!!!”

She was tackled immediately by Alas Ramus, whose face was covered in tears and snot. Alas Ramus's voice was muffled, but she most likely kept screaming "Mommy" as she buried her face into Emi.

Having no chance of dodging, Emi had no choice but to accept Alas Ramus into her arms.

"BEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!"

"Uh, um, uh,"

The force that thumped into Emi was surprisingly heavy.

A clinging, crying child. Something that she must protect with every fiber of her being as the hero.

However, this child claimed that she was its mother. With her elbow bent at an awkward angle, Emi had no idea what to do in this imagination-defying situation, and could not decide on her next course of action.

"I-I don't know what I'm supposed to..."

As Emi looked up while being completely baffled...

“Stop looking at me like that!”

Everyone in the room was looking at her to see what she would do next.

“Urrrrrgh... you guys haven’t forgotten, right? This little girl stopped my holy sword with her bare hands! She might not be an ordinary baby!”

“But Emilia, that does not have to do with the matter at hand. Consider the emotions of the little girl who thinks of you as her mother.”

“Bell! You’re just saying that because it’s got nothing to do with you!”

“BEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!”

“Wha-what’s so bad about this, Yusa-san!? I-I would love to switch places with you!”

“Chiho-chan, you’re saying that because you have an ulterior motive...”

“MOOOOMMMYYYYY!!”

“Geez, I already told you, I’m not your mommy... geez...”

As if finally giving in, but timidly, Emi placed her hands underneath Alas Ramus.

Either way, she began by picking her up to calm her down,

“...”

This time, Emi was surprised by how light she was. Alas Ramus had no trace of the great force she had when she tackled Emi.

Her skin and body were so soft, as if just a slight force might break her. Emi’s own words, “stopped the holy sword with her bare hands,” crossed her mind. As Emi picked up Alas Ramus slowly and cautiously, Alas Ramus, who had been sticking her face into Emi’s stomach, raised her face.

“...”

Emi looked down with a slight frown, as she saw a shiny silver bridge of snot extending from the baby’s nose to Emi’s shirt.

“Hic... sniff... mommyyyy...”

Even as she cried with all her soul and strength, her large pupils captured Emi’s gaze as she looked to her for assurance with a little girl’s trust.

“Fi-fine... okay...”

Emi “held” Alas Ramus in a manner that implied she had given up.

Alas Ramus’s chin rested on her shoulder, and her pudgy baby arms held her neck and shoulder tightly.

“Hic... mommyy... fweeeh...”

Alas Ramus changed from crying her lungs out to letting out small sobs, having calmed down somewhat.

So adorable, but what am I supposed to do about this? But she’s so adorable. What do I do? Those were Emi’s honest thoughts.

Emi stroked the back of her yellow dress to settle her down, and asked Maou, “So... what are we going to do now?”

“What are we going to do now? What are we *supposed* to do?”

“I’m the one asking you.”

“I don’t know, but you look like a natural at this.”

“...Do you not realize that saying those words are the equivalent of putting a noose around your neck?”

“Hey, I’ve been wondering for a while, but how did this kid know that Maou is Satan?” asked Urushihara while looking at Alas Ramus and Maou.

“Unlike mine, Maou’s demon and human forms look pretty different, don’t they?”

“How should I know? She did sniff my hand earlier, so maybe that’s how she knew?”

“Maou, all your hand ever smells like is MgRonald.”

“It’s a great smell!”

Maou retaliated to the wrong point.

“...But what *can* we do?”

Wondered Maou after snapping back at Urushihara, looking at Alas Ramus with a troubled frown.

Alas Ramus, about to fall through Emi's arms, wiggled slightly and hugged Emi's neck tightly again. Emi also adjusted to support Alas Ramus's bottom.

“Oh, could it be what they call ‘imprinting?’ Maybe when she saw Maou-san and Yusa-san, she mistook you two for her parents?”

Chiho suggested as she raised her hand, but Maou shook his head.

“That sounds possible, but if that were true, she wouldn’t have said Daddy is Satan.’ Alas Ramus didn’t say ‘Maou,’ or even ‘Demon King,’ but ‘Satan.’ Could she have heard someone call me ‘Satan?’”

“Oh, you’re right...”

“Well, the name ‘Satan’ is as common as rocks in the demon world, but she came all the way to Japan and called me ‘Satan.’ I think we can be sure that when she said ‘Satan,’ she didn’t mean anyone else but me.”

“Th-then, Maou-san, are you going to accept Alas Ramus-chan!?”

“Chii-chan, Chii-chan, you’re getting worked up.”

Maou replied wearily to Chiho, who seemed desperate for some reason.

“You intrigued me when you mentioned that ‘the name Satan is as common as rocks,’ but what is your point?”

Suzuno steered the conversation forward, and Maou nodded.

“The simplest explanation is this, isn’t it? Someone camouflaged Alas Ramus as an apple and sent her to me, and...”

“...We don’t know whether they’re a friend or an enemy, but they’ll be here soon, right?”

Emi, who was holding Alas Ramus, finished the thought with a serious expression.

“Pretty much. I probably shouldn’t say this, but it’s most likely got something to do with you again. No matter how you look at it, she doesn’t seem like she’d be connected with someone from the demon world.”

“...Shut up... I actually do feel bad that Chiho-chan got dragged into this because of me.”

“What about the rest of us? What are we, chopped liver?”

“Ho-how do you know that this has something to do with Yusa-san?”

Emi looked at her right hand, which was holding Alas Ramus at the moment. She then answered

Chiho’s worried question,

“This little girl stopped the holy sword with her bare hands, and reacted to me, its wielder. That’s more than enough evidence. Chiho-chan, you still remember how Sariel wanted my holy sword, right?”

When the angel Sariel had attacked just a few days prior, both Chiho and Emi had been kidnapped. He had attempted to forcibly take the holy sword from Emi using his special power, “Wicked Light of the Fallen.”

“Sariel never said why he wanted the holy sword. As if I’d let him take it before I’ve finished off this beggar demon king. We still don’t know the reason behind all of this, and now, a little child capable of stopping the holy sword in its tracks has shown up. It’s impossible to say that this isn’t related somehow, isn’t it?”

“Don’t pretend to be thinking logically just so you can mix in some insult towards me.”

Emi then asked Chiho, ignoring Maou’s quip,

“Come to think of it, what’s going on with Sariel? What’s he doing now?”

Chiho’s answer was short, blunt, and to the point.

“He’s getting fat.”

“Huh?”

“He comes to eat at MgRonald every day just to see Kisaki-san, and he always supersizes everything. He’s realized that she loves whoever contributes to her profit margin. But because of that, he’s gotten surprisingly fat in just a little over a week.”

Sariel’s plan failed because Maou had reawakened his demon king alter ego, but the angel had now wholly became his once-fake identity of Mitsuki Sarue, manager of the Hatagaya Station Branch of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Having fallen in love at first sight with Mayumi Kisaki, the manager of MgRonald and Maou’s supervisor, Sariel abandoned heaven and all his missions so he could come to MgRonald every day without fail.

Since Kisaki wasn’t always working there, he sometimes came face to face with Maou, the temporary shift manager. However, Sariel had even proclaimed that he was willing to become a fallen angel for Kisaki.

He seemed to be aware that Kisaki knew what his intentions in coming to MgRonald were, and was so polite to Maou and Chiho that it became disturbing. It was as if he was trying to pretend that his previous violent acts had never happened.

“...Well, I don’t know if that idiot angel has anything to do with this, but I hope he doesn’t get involved if we get into some sort of trouble. He hurts our business with all his antics.”

“Sariel... the holy sword incident aside, I do not believe he is involved directly with Alas Ramus,” added Suzuno.

“It is not that he had run out of sacred power in our previous battle, but rather that he is choosing of his own free will not to return. If he had something to do with Alas Ramus, he would have flown here the instant she appeared.”

At those words, Urushihara checked on his security cameras, Chiho peeked out into the public hallway from the kitchen window, and Ashiya glanced outside through the door.

“Besides, the name ‘Alas Ramus’ is not from a Heavenly language. It comes from a human language widely used in Ente Isla.”

“What?”

“The meaning of ‘Alas’ is ‘wing,’ and that of ‘Ramus’ is ‘branch.’

Furthermore, the words come specifically from the central trading language, ‘Centrumian,’ that is used exclusively in Isla Centrum.”

The language had earned its title from being used as a common language for standardizing units of measurement and contract negotiations in Isla Centrum, which was the center of trade and commerce due to its location in between the north, south, east, and west continents.

Those who spoke the central trading language were mostly government officials, high-order clergy, or traders, but it was the only language that would be universally understood in all of Ente Isla.

“In other words, somewhere in Ente Isla, she has a parent who gave her this name. We do not know whether that person is a human or an angel, but they cannot possibly be a demon...”

Regardless, they still had no idea who had given her that name and with what purpose. “So either way, we can only react to whatever’s coming at us next. We have to wait for someone who we don’t even know if it’s a friend or a foe, while holding this mysterious Alas Ramus in our arms.

Maou concluded with a serious expression. Even Emi and Suzuno listened to Maou’s words. “Whatever you say, in the end, it all boils down to who’s going to take care of Alas Ramus, doesn’t it?”

Urushihara’s interjected, moving the conversation along. At that moment, the demon king’s castle became silent aside from the cries of cicadas.

“I thought she was quiet for a while. So she fell asleep, huh.”

Maou looked at Alas Ramus, who slept while still resting her head on Emi’s shoulder.

“...I don’t want such a little girl to get dragged into some sinister plot.”

Emi sighed, and stroked Alas Ramus’s back.

“Aside from the whole apple thing, she’s basically just a little baby girl. Goochy goochy goo...” Maou had some fun and poked her in the cheek. Emi glared back at Maou.

“Hey, knock it off. She’s finally asleep.”

After being scolded, Maou pulled his hand back.

“Sigh... I’m so jealous, Yusa-san...”

Chiho watched the three of them act like they belonged together. Even though she thought it was adorable, she couldn’t help but feel jealous and puff her cheeks out.

“Chiho-dono, Chiho-dono. Your true feelings are written all over your face.”

Suzuno pointed this out to Chiho, causing her to realize what she was doing.

After pulling Maou away from his fooling around with Alas Ramus, Emi let out a deep sigh.

“I can’t take her home with me. I live on my own, and my job keeps me too busy to have the time to take care of her.”

“But Demon King Castle is even more ill-equipped to take her in. Our budget can’t handle another mouth to feed, and we’re a group of three men.”

Ashiya also objected right away. Not only did they already have a dead weight that ate food and contributed nothing in return, but the three men lived in a six-tatami room with no air conditioning. They couldn’t make it a worse environment to raise a little child in if they tried.

“I’m sorry... I want to help, but I can’t think of any reasons that would convince my parents.”

Chiho also chimed in with an apologetic tone.

“You do not need to concern yourself, Chiho-dono. This is an Ente Islan problem.” Suzuno patted Chiho’s shoulder to make her feel better.

“I do not want to see a little child with no relatives shuffled around among adults because she would be an inconvenience to them. Besides, I do not have a job, so I do not mind taking her in. I also have experience in the caretaking of large numbers of children.

Although Suzuno’s appearance would suggest that she was about the same age as Chiho, if not younger, considering her position and her history with the Church of the Divine Creed, she was actually the oldest of the girls in the group.

The rest of the group already knew that bringing her age up would be the equivalent of throwing their own lives away, but going by age and her experience from being in a clergy, they all thought Suzuno would be the most qualified of them all.

Moreover, the image of her wearing a yukata, which was more or less her default housework uniform, with an apron on top and a bandana on her head, carrying Alas Ramus on her back in a baby strap just somehow seemed right.

In response to Suzuno’s proposal, Emi, Ashiya, Chiho, and even Urushihara, who never even tried to help, made expressions of relief.

“...”

Maou was the only one who did not loosen his face.

In an atmosphere where things had finally began to calm down because of the ideal plan to have a clergywoman from the Church of the Divine Creed take care of the little baby who seemed to be somehow related to the Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half, Maou repeatedly looked from Emi, to Alas Ramus, to his own hand.

“...Um, Maou-san?”

The first person to take notice of that was, unsurprisingly, Chiho.

“Is... something wrong?”

“Yeah. There’s one thing... no, two things that I don’t get.”

Maou answered while looking at Emi, and not Chiho.

“I might be overthinking it, but...”

Muttered Maou as he placed his hand on his forehead. Chiho tilted her head, not knowing what Maou was trying to say. He continued to mumble and think out loud without waiting for an answer from Chiho.

“...Why didn’t she say, ‘Mommy is Emilia’...?”

“What?”

Chiho widened her eyes, as his answer changed the flow of the conversation abruptly. But more importantly, at that precise moment, Chiho felt an indescribable pain run through her heart.

She tried to ignore that pain.

She knew that “Emilia” was Emi’s real name. She also understood that Emi and Suzuno were Maou’s enemies.

But this thought ran across Chiho’s mind.

“Will I... ever be more than just ‘Chii-chan’...?”

She was an ordinary high school girl who knew of their secrets, but she did not have any special powers.

The unanswered confession aside, when she had been kidnapped by Sariel, Maou had declared that she was “a subordinate whom he must protect.”

She only knew about them, and that was all. Both at work and outside of work, she was always being protected by Maou.

Even in a moment like this, the inner tension between her rational self, which realized that she had to accept who she was, and her yearning self, which wanted to be treated as his equal, pierced her heart.

“Hm? Did you say something, Chii-chan?”

“...Sorry, it’s nothing.”

Chiho was ashamed of not being fully focused on the situation at hand, and drew back from the circle that surrounded Alas Ramus.

Of course, Maou did not even notice Chiho’s heartache, and after showing signs of hesitation, said something no one was expecting.

“It’s decided, then. Alas Ramus will stay in Demon King Castle.”

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“...So where did Urushihara-san actually go?”

As Chiho repeated her question while remembering the chaotic events of the previous day, the answer came to her from an unexpected place.

“Maaaan, it’s so hot. Ashiya, are we eating yet?”

The sliding screen to the closet opened with a rattle, and a sweat-covered Urushihara emerged from it.

“Oh? You’re here, Chiho Sasaki?”



Chiho was at a loss for words at the sudden turn of events.

Upon a closer look, she saw that a flashlight, the laptop, and a mini-fan were inside the closet.

Urushihara came out of the closet as Chiho watched him, then walked over to the refrigerator with a nonchalant expression, took one of Alas Ramus's bottles of barley tea, and returned to the closet.

“Well, make yourself at home.”

Said Urushihara, as the useless robot cat wannabe closed the sliding screen.\*\*

**\*\*This is a reference to Doraemon, a cat-like robot who also slept in a closet.**

“...Ashiya-san...”

“I saw nothing.”

Said Ashiya, with no energy in his voice.

“I do not want him to cross my field of vision ever again. Last night, my lord and I took turns trying to get Alas Ramus to stop crying, but she never showed signs of stopping and kept asking, “where is mommy? where is mommy...?” Lucifer has been spending most of his time in the closet since last night.”

“Urushihara-san should just shrivel up and die from dehydration.”

Chiho empathized with Aшия from the bottom of her heart.

When Maou had said that he was going to take Alas Ramus in, Suzuno, who had been the first to volunteer as her caretaker, opposed him.

But when Alas Ramus woke up and said that she wanted to be with Daddy, Suzuno agreed to it surprisingly easily.

“A child’s wishes are to be respected. However, I will take her out of your arms as soon as I see the first sign of you doing anything that would be detrimental to her upbringing,” warned Suzuno.

And since she possessed holy power stronger than the three demons combined and lived right next door, her words carried weight.

However, the “Mommy” problem still remained. Unlike Suzuno, Emi was not their neighbor. Alas Ramus was seemingly satisfied with being able to

live with Maou, which solved their first problem. However, she was already glancing nervously towards Emi, who was getting ready to leave to go shopping with Suzuno like they had originally been planning to.

“Mommy, are you leevin me again?”

She asked with tearful eyes. Emi was at a loss for words.

“...?”

Maou tilted his head at Alas Ramus’s question, and said to her in a persuasive tone,

“Hey, listen, Alas Ramus, Mommy is going out juuust for a little bit.”

“gowing out?”

“Yep, she’ll be right back!”

“...weally?”

Emi hesitated as Alas Ramus looked at her with a clinging expression. Maou mouthed, “Just go with it!” to Emi from behind Alas Ramus.

“Re-really. I’m coming back.”

“ah’ll be a good girl and wait for yu den.”

Alas Ramus nodded, faithfully believing every word that Emi said. Everyone except Urushihara felt like they had been stabbed in the heart with a dagger.

Because of the Alas Ramus incident, it was nearly evening when Emi and Suzuno left. Chiho also had to go home, so she only knew what had happened to that point. However...

“Did Yusa-san not come back?”

“No, she did come back with Crestia... however, that’s when the trouble began.”

“Alas Ramus thought she was going to sleep together with Emilia.”

At that moment, the door to Demon King Castle opened and Suzuno came in with some shopping bags, just like Chiho had.

“Hi, Suzuno-san.”

“Alciel, here are the bento and vitamin drink that you wanted.”

Suzuno bluntly handed the bags over to Ashiya, who took them lethargically and said, "...I'm not going to thank you. How much was it?"

"The ginger-fried pork Orion-bento was five-hundred yen. The vitamin drinks are for me, but I will let you have one."

"..."

Ashiya took out a five-hundred yen coin and handed it to Suzuno without saying a word, got up, and took off the bento packaging.

**\*Orion-bento is a spoof on Origin-bento.**

"Excuse me, Sasaki-san, I'm going to eat my lunch now..."

"Huh? Oh, ye-yes, please, don't mind me."

"What? Lunch?"

Just then, Urushihara slid open the closet screen and poked his head out after smelling the ginger-fried pork. But,

"Silence, parasite."

The great archdemon general who had conquered the Eastern Continent of Ente Isla in just one year gave Urushihara an expression and voice so filled with unbelievable malice and hatred that it seemed it would physically injure

him. Surprisingly, Urushihara said nothing in return and retreated behind the sliding screen.

And then, Ashiya slowly proceeded to eat the bento without paying any attention to Suzuno or Chiho.

“To think that Ashiya-san would pay for and eat an Orion-bento...”

Chiho made a perceptive comment on just how abnormal an action this was for Ashiya, and wiped a tear from her eye.

“Her crying last night defied all imagination. Even I, with a wall between her and me, was forcibly woken up multiple times.”

Upon a closer look, Suzuno was actually wearing makeup. Just how extremely rare this sight was could not be overstated, for she almost never wore makeup. The corner of her eyes slumped downwards tiredly. She must have been severely affected.

“There was an incredible uproar this morning as well. She adamantly refused to let the demon king leave for work. She must have thought that the demon king would not return either since Emilia left after coming back once.”

“I see... but it’s not like Yusa-san can just stay here overnight, either.”

As she was a woman and the hero, she absolutely could not stay over at Demon King Castle, thought Chiho.

But in actuality, Emi had already stayed the night there once before. Ignorance is bliss.

Staying at Suzuno's room may have been another possible solution, but wouldn't work either. Suzuno only had the bare minimum of cosmetics, and since it was the middle of the summer, Emi would need a change of clothes.

However, if she kept going back and forth between here and Emi's apartment in Eifuku town, the bathhouse in Sasazuka would be closed before she could go there. She had work the next morning, and couldn't possibly go in without taking a bath.

“It is not as if Emilia does not care at all, but she cannot disregard her real world responsibilities, either.”

Said Suzuno, as she took out a cellphone from her yutaka sleeve, opened it, and showed the screen to Chiho.

The name “Emilia” was written on the screen. And right next to it was a message that read:

“I'll stop by tomorrow. I really feel bad about this, but please take care of her.”

Chiho read the message, but she was more interested in the fact that Suzuno had a cellphone to begin with. She looked back and forth between the phone and Suzuno.

“Suzuno-san, you bought a cellphone?”

“Hm? Oh, yes. I purchased it yesterday. I asked Emilia for help, and she taught me numerous things.”

“Yay! Let’s exchange numbers! It’s a Docodemo phone, right?”

Suzuno’s phone was not the popular slimphone, but rather an ordinary flip phone.

“E-exchange? I am not certain how the process works. I believe there is a infrared sensor gun feature on this phone.”

Suzuno searched for a feature that might defeat a gigantic monster for a while, looking all over her phone with a frown on her face. However, she eventually gave up and handed it over to Chiho with a look of defeat.

“...My apologies, Chiho-dono, but I cannot make heads or tails out of this. I would like your assistance.”

“Sure, but are you really okay with me messing around with your phone?”

“I do not mind. It was just purchased, so all I have done with it is save Emilia’s number.”

By no means did Chiho consider herself to be a gadget expert, but if it was just a cellphone, she was confident that she would be able to figure out how to use it from playing around with it, even if it worked slightly differently from her own.

However, when Chiho flipped the phone open, there was something strange about it.

Chiho also had a Docodemo flip phone, but the numbers printed on Suzuno’s phone were very large.

Additionally, obnoxiously large keys for numbers “1,” “2,” and “3” sat on the top row of the number pad. She had not seen anything like that on her phone, her family’s phones, or her friends’ phones.

And to top it all off, there was a dedicated “help” key at the bottom left of the number pad.

“Suzuno-san, is this... is this a Docodemo ‘Super-Easy Phone?’”

At Chiho’s question, Suzuno made a shocked expression and nodded.

“Astounding, Chiho-dono! You can tell models apart just by looking at them!?”

“We-well, sure, kind of.”

“I have no attachments to any particular model, and I do not require any function other than communication. Furthermore, I have no confidence in being able to use a phone well, so I asked for the absolute-easiest one, and this is what was given to me.”

As Suzuno explained confidently, Chiho stopped thinking too much about it.

TV commercials always portrayed the Super-Easy Phone to be targeted at elderly people who were not adept at using technology. However, there was nothing preventing a member of the younger generation from using one.

Soon enough, Chiho found the infrared function on Suzuno’s phone and exchanged their contact information by matching her phone’s sensor to Suzuno’s.

“Here, it’s done. I saved my number on your phone, Suzuno-san.”

“You have my gratitude. My knowledge of phones stops at black rotary phones, so even though I tried to read the manual, I did not understand even the very basic vocabulary.”

Suzuno said in an embarrassed voice, and took her phone back.

And at that precise moment,

“...daddyy...”

Everyone in the room froze, and turned to look at the origin of the voice.

Alas Ramus, who was supposed to have fallen asleep just a little while ago, had gotten up slowly and looked around sleepily.

“Ngh...”

Ashiya was taken by surprise, causing him to choke on his ginger-fried pork and let out a muffled cry.

“wheah is daddy?”

Seeing that neither Maou nor Emi were in the vicinity, Alas Ramus's face turned red in a matter of seconds and she began crying like a faucet had been turned on in her head.

“DAAAAAAAADDYYYYYY!!!”

And she exploded. Ashiya forced the pork down with a gulp of barley tea and rushed over to try to calm her down, but he had no idea how to stop her shrieking.

“Excuse me, Ashiya-san.”

However, Chiho calmly asked Ashiya to step aside.

“Ashiya-san, is this diaper...”

Alas Ramus was wearing a diaper, but it was bulging to the point of nearly bursting.

“Yes, I bought that yesterday.”

Suzuno was the one to answer.

“After Emilia went home, Alas Ramus had a great accident. We completely forgot about being prepared for such things, but since the pharmacies were already closed, we had to resort to buying some from the convenience store next to the station...”

Upon a closer look, there was a small bag of diapers that had been opened violently next to the bathroom.

“...Ashiya san, no wonder.”

“Wha-what is it?”

“Of course she would cry. You didn’t change her diaper even once the entire night?”

Chiho said sternly as if scolding him, took out a new diaper, and placed it on the tatami mat.

And after lying Alas Ramus on top of it,

“Ashiya-san, there’s a bottle that looks like a syringe in the bag that I brought. Could you fill it with the water from the faucet and bring it to me, please?”

“Ye-yes, but um, the water from the faucet is lukewarm.”

“That’s actually better. Please hurry.”

After giving quick instructions, as Ashiya and Suzuno looked on, Chiho used one hand to hold and lift both of Alas Ramus’s legs, and her other hand to remove the taped-on diaper.

“Okay, let’s get your bum nice and clean!”

After taking the bottle, she slowly squeezed the warm water onto Alas Ramus’s bottom. Ashiya and Suzuno were shocked for a second, but the running water quickly disappeared into the absorbent diaper.

Chiho then put down the bottle and used a wet wipe to clean any leftovers. Next, she placed the used wipe in the diaper, lifted Alas Ramus’s legs just a little bit higher, and pulled the diaper out from under her and put it aside.

After doing all of that single-handedly in one smooth action, Chiho gently placed Alas Ramus’s bottom on the new diaper that she had laid out beforehand, and quickly fastened it with tape.

Before anyone could even blink, Alas Ramus, who had been crying like a typhoon, calmed down. Ashiya gaped at Chiho and Alas Ramus with his eyes wide open.

“...Since she kept screaming for Emilia, I just assumed she was lonely...”

“Well, you’re not wrong, but babies often don’t know how to precisely say what they want. If something’s bothering them, they just repeat phrases they already know over and over again.”

Chiho rolled up the old diaper and trash together and threw them into the flammable trash bin.

She then wiped her own hands with the wet wipes, picked up Alas Ramus, and rubbed her cheek against the baby’s apple-like face.

“See? You don’t like being dirty, riiight?”

“ouuuuh.”

Alas Ramus replied, but it was unclear whether she was agreeing or just making a noise.

However, it was clear that the reason for Alas Ramus’s crying last night had been the dirty diaper.

“It’s okay. Daddy and... Mommy... will be back soon! So be a good girl and wait for them, okay?”

Chiho felt some form of inner resistance against calling Emi “Mommy,” but she knew it was pointless to brood over something like that in front of a little baby, so she just let it go and said what she thought would best calm down Alas Ramus.

“yesh.”

Alas Ramus looked straight back at Chiho through her teary eyes and nodded with a gentle smile.

“Geez... you’re so cute. That’s a good girl.”

Chiho nearly melted at the adorable sight of Alas Ramus wiping her tears with her tiny little hands.

“Huh...?”

At the exact moment Alas Ramus stopped crying, Chiho saw a purple, crescent-shaped mark appear on the baby’s forehead. Her entire body started to emit a glow in the same color as her one-piece dress.

But in a blink of an eye, the mark and glow disappeared.

No drastic change had occurred to Alas Ramus during that series of events, but Chiho sighed upon being reminded once more of her mysterious origin from an alternate world.

Chiho knew that all she could do was pour out her love on the little child, and she hugged Alas Ramus once again.

“Wapu!”

Alas Ramus let out a surprised cry.

Ashiya fell down on his knees at the sight before him.

“No, I cannot even be compared with Sasaki-san... I’m ashamed to have boasted of myself as a knowledge general at one point in my life... A diaper change that used the abilities of the diaper itself to bring out its maximum potential... I feel as if a blindfold has been removed from my face...”

Ashiya was probably the only demon aiming for world domination in the universe who would lament about not knowing to change a baby’s diaper, but his remorse over his lack of knowledge on the subject matter was genuine.

Not knowing how to respond to Ashiya, Chiho looked up at the clock on the wall and tried to change the topic.

“What time will Yusa-san be back?”

“She will not return until her job is over, so I would assume the eighteenth hour at the earliest.”

“Suzuno-san, you know Yusa-san’s shift schedule?”

“I do not know, but I have ambushed her before.”

Chiho had no idea what Suzuno was talking about, but she remembered something and looked at the bag that she had brought.

“Suzuno-san, there’s a notebook with a pink cover in my bag, and right inside that, there’s a folded piece of paper. Can you get that and open it for me?”

“Of course, just wait for a second... is this it?”

Chiho, who still had her hands full holding Alas Ramus, looked down at the paper that Suzuno was holding in front of her.

“Maou-san is acting shift manager from morning until after lunchtime today, and Kisaki-san will come in after peak time, and... oh, he’s getting off early today. Four in the afternoon, huh?”

What she was referring to was not a typical electronic timesheet, but a handmade shift chart that Kisaki handed out to every employee. According to the chart, Maou's shift ended at 4 PM.

The current time was 2:30 PM. Chiho looked from the time on her phone to the shift chart and then,

“How about this? Why don't we take Alas Ramus-chan to MgRonald?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“What?”

Ashiya and Suzuno looked at Chiho with a confused face.

“She'll get really bored if she's holed up in here for so long. If we take her out for a walk, she might get in a better mood, and she'll see her “daddy” sooner, right?”

“Daddyy!”

Alas Ramus happily raised her arms while still being held by Chiho as she reacted instantaneously to the word “daddy.” She absolutely adored her daddy.

However, Ashiya raised his face from a depressed posture and disagreed.

“I have no idea what reasons my lord had for taking in Alas Ramus, but I still do not think it would be best for her to be out in the open unnecessarily while we still are not certain about her situation...”

“No, I actually concur with Chiho-dono. Even if we do not completely understand her situation, perhaps something may come to light if we take the initiative. Furthermore, the social system set in this world is not so simple as to let the likes of you take care of some unknown child. For example, what if Alas Ramus becomes ill and you have to take her to a hospital? How would you take her to the doctors with no proof of guardianship or insurance?”

Ashiya had no response to Suzuno’s insightful rebuttal.

Suzuno looked at Alas Ramus, who was happily being held by Chiho as if her crying just a few moments ago had all been lies and imagination.

“Do not worry. As I am now, I am confident that i will be able to fend off some demons or angels. And if some more light is shed on this situation, we will be able to decide on our next course of action. Would that not be beneficial to you as well?”

“That... may be true, but...”

“Besides, Alciel, no matter what the situation may be, or who might be behind everything, do we all not share the common desire to protect Alas Ramus?”

“I don’t share that at aaaaall.”

The entire room ignored the sound that came from the closet.

“So I believe that it is in the best interest of Alas Ramus’s health for us to take her out on a walk.

Do you not?”

Suzuno then turned to look at the closet.

“Besides, I feel that that existence over there is going to have an adverse effect on child development.”

“I agree.”

Chiho nodded emphatically.

“Hey, you’re insulting me again, aren’t you.”

Urushihara realized that he was being insulted, but since he stayed in his closet, he seemed not to have a shred of motivation to change his attitude.

“...Very well. However, as the subordinate of the demon king, I cannot just simply hand over Alas Ramus, who my lord has decided to take under his care! I will permit it only if I am to come as well!”

Said Ashiya with food in his mouth as he quickly stuffed the rest of the bento into his face, then proceeded to chug an entire vitamin drink in one go.

This lack of eating manners was another example of abnormal behavior from Ashiya, who usually took great care to conduct himself in a respectful fashion. However, as soon as he finished the drink,

“Ugh-”

Ashiya let out a grunt, and fell face up.

“Ashiya-san!?”

Chiho frantically ran over to help Ashiya, but after struggling painfully for a few seconds, his eyes closed as peacefully as if he had just died.,

“Ahsheel bedtime!”

Alas Ramus said happily while the blood instantly drained from Chiho's face. Chiho wondered if Suzuno had done something to the drink in order to kill Maou and his underlings.

“Su—...”

However, Ashiya began to snore as soon as that thought ran through her head.

“...It seems like that finally did him in.”

Suzuno shook her head with a tired expression.

“Even I, who was next door, was woken up multiple times. I cannot begin to imagine what it must have been like for Alciel, who was right next to her.”

Suzuno picked up the small bottle that Ashiya dropped as he collapsed, while keeping an eye on the closet.

“This is what I received from Emilia yesterday. This may have been somewhat of a rough method, but Alciel probably would not have rested on his own. I noticed last time, but whenever Alciel collapses, it triggers events around them.”

Suzuno showed her the vitamin drink bottle. “Holy Vitamin Beta” and some words written in a language Chiho had never seen before were printed on it.

“...What does the bottle say?”

“The label is in the Ente Islan language. Just think of it as medicine that weakens a demon’s physical strength.”

From Suzuno’s cautious glances at the closet, Chiho understood that it was something she didn’t want the demons to find out about.

“Oh, come to think of it...”

Chiho looked at Ashiya, who seemed to be sleeping uncomfortably, and then at Alas Ramus.

“Earlier, you said ‘Ahsheel’... Alas Ramus-chan, you can say Ashiya-san’s name?”

“ou?”

Alas Ramus, who was still in Chiho’s arms, looked back at Chiho with a finger in her mouth. Chiho looked back into her big eyes and thought for a moment.

“Alas Ramus-chan,”

“yesh?”

She answered energetically with arms raised high. With just that, Chiho felt as if her cheeks would melt off.

“My name is Chiho!”

“Chioh?”

“Chi-ho. Your daddy calls me Chii-chan.”

“Chii-cha!”

Then Alas Ramus’s face lit up as if she had remembered something.

“Daddy’s fwend!”

“Alas Ramus.”

Suzuno interjected from the side.

“Chiho-dono is an older figure to you. “Chii-chan” is too informal.”

“Ouu? Ou?”

“Let’s see, try calling her ‘Chiho-oneechan.’”

Alas Ramus looked up to Chiho while concentrating all her strength in her body in a strange way, as she took Suzuno’s slight scolding seriously.

“Chio... Chi, Ne... Ou,”

And as she tried her best to replicate Suzuno’s suggestion,

“Chii-neecha!”

Alas Ramus finally settled into a name.

“Ahhhh! You’re too cute!!”

Chiho could not hold her emotions back anymore, and rubbed her cheek against Alas Ramus over and over again.

“Chii-neecha! Chii-neecha...!”

Alas Ramus repeated the name over and over again while pointing at Chiho, as if she was confirming it.

“...ou,”

She then stared at Suzuno, who stood next to Chiho.

“Wha-what is it...?”

Suzuno gulped, as she faced a different kind of pressure.

“This big girl’s name is Suzuno-oneechan!”

Said Chiho, as she astutely inferred what Alas Ramus was seeking, and since she had done this once already, her reply was much faster.

“Suzu-neecha!”

Alas Ramus pointed decisively, as if giving an order. Suzuno’s face immediately turned red.

“Suzu-nee... yes. I suppose, that is acceptable, yes.”

“Chii-neecha! Suzu-neecha!”

Just like when she had said Maou and Emi were her parents, Alas Ramus said the two names over and over again as if she were double-checking.

“Aaaaah! Geez! Soo cuuuute!”

“S-stop repeating it over and over again! Ugh... no! Stop looking at me like that! This is inexcusable! You are too adorable!”

As the two red-faced girls were raising their voices and getting excited,

“...You’re both so simple.”

They glared intensely at the closet where the mood-killing voice had come from.

Suzuno stepped over Ashiya on the floor, stood in front of the sliding screen, and pounded on it loudly several times.

“Wha!?”

Instantaneously, Urushihara could be heard being rattled inside.

“Anyway, it is as you heard. Chiho-dono and I will be taking Alas Ramus on a walk. Tell Alciel that when he awakens. We will be back when either the demon king or Emilia finishes with their work.”

“Geez, you scared me. Yeah, yeah, do what you want. Just please pretend that I don’t exist, no matter what happens.”

“We were all planning on doing exactly that, but you will not be struck by lightning if you try to make yourself useful by passing on a message.”

“...Why does it feel like there’s a category for me and a category for everyone else? Aren’t you both humans?”

“Why do you not listen to your heart? Danger unites friends and foes alike, but without fail, you always look out for yourself and no one else.”

“Loosifah, yooseless?”

Questioned Alas Ramus, as she watched the conversation between Suzuno and the screen. It seemed the voice had reached inside the closet as well.

Some sense of stirring could be felt from within.

“Children are honest and learn quickly.”

And Suzuno delivered the final blow.

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3:00 PM.

A cry echoed like thunder throughout the Hatagaya Station MgRonald.

“Daddy!!”

The sound was aimed precisely at one direction, and moved quickly towards one man.

Time within the restaurant stopped, and all present turned to look at the source and target of the sound.

One crew member stopped right in the middle of helping a customer, while another dropped a stack of trays, and another forgot to take their finger off of the drink dispenser, causing a great waterfall of orange juice.

A melody that announced when fries were done played in the background, not fitting at all with the sudden change of atmosphere.

The man who was struck by that heaven-shattering lighting froze in place for a moment, with a dazed expression that resembled that of someone who could not believe his own eyes, ears, or the entire world. However, as he was showered by looks from the entire restaurant crew, light quickly returned to his eyes.

“!!!!!”

It was the very definition of a voiceless scream.

Sadao Maou launched himself using an invisible catapult that he had just obtained, leapt into the air with one leg, and took flight.

“Daddyy!”

Chiho and Suzuno froze like statues as they suddenly changed the atmosphere of the restaurant when they stepped in. Meanwhile, the small, small apple girl, Alas Ramus, who was in Chiho’s arms, saw nothing other than her beloved Daddy running to her at full speed.

“Wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-what do you think you’re doing!?”

Maou pressed them for an answer with a face was so pale that he might foam at the mouth and faint at any second.

“What were you thinking, bringing her here!? Hey! Come on! This isn’t funny!”

“Uh, um, I’m sorry, but we thought it would make Alas Ramus-chan happy...”

“She kept crying, saying she wanted to see Daddy. We thought that maybe if she were in a happier mood, she may remember something, and that is why we brought her here.”

Feeling the tense atmosphere in the restaurant and knowing that she may have made a mistake were causing Chiho to panick, but Suzuno was not fazed in the slightest.

And Alas Ramus, who could not care less about what was happening around her, started fidgeting violently in Chiho’s arms and extended her hands towards Maou.

“Daddy! Daaaaddy!”

“He-stop! Don’t move around so much, it’s dange...”

“St-stop calling me that over and over! Please!”

Chiho almost let Alas Ramus fall, but Maou caught her just in time and supported her.

“Daddyyyy!”

Alas Ramus, who was caught by Maou, wore the biggest, brightest smile ever, and hugged his neck tightly.

“Daddyyy! Ah came to see yuuuu!”

“O-o-okay, ahahaha...”

As Maou laughed dryly,

“Is that Maou-san and Sasaki-san’s child?”

“No way. If that were true, I’d murder Maou-san in his sleep. No, I’d drown him.”

“Where’s Kisaki-san? If she hears about this, this place will get turned into a sea of blood.”

“Crap! The fries! The fries are getting burnt!”

Voices of curiosity, agitation, and questioning could be heard behind his back.

“Ahahaha... Maou-san, I-I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have done this...”

Chiho noticed a great shadow approaching behind the backs of the frowning Maou and smiling Alas Ramus, and made an expression that was, in a way, more horrified than even Maou's.

“What is the matter, Chiho-dono? Your face is pale. Were you under the sun for too long?”

But Suzuno's misplaced concern did not reach Chiho's ears, because...

“Maaaaaa-kuuuuuun?”

The manager of the restaurant, Mayumi Kisaki, stood with an expression that resembled a terrifying mask.

“Hyeh!!”

“Ou?”

Maou snapped to attention with a force that could have popped his spine out.

“If my eyes and ears didn't deceive me, that little girl Chii-chan brought in called you 'Daddy,' didn't she? Hm?”

“...yessshedid.”

Maou answered honestly, realizing that Kisaki's voice carried great pressure that would not forgive even a hint of a lie.

Both Maou and Chiho waited with pale faces for the next lightning strike that would inevitably come from Kisaki.

However, seeing that Kisaki did nothing for the next few moments, Maou turned around slowly and fearfully.

“You’re Maou and Sasaki’s friend, Kamazuki-san… was it?” Suzuno nodded simply.

“May I borrow Sasaki for a little while?”

Kisaki asked unexpectedly.

“…I do not- I mean, … Sure, I don’t mind…”

Remembering the last time she had met Kisaki, she quickly changed the way she carried herself and her manner of speech.

“Thank you. Hey, Maa-kun, show Kamazuki-san to her seat. I’ll take the child.”

“Huh? Su-sure, bu-but—”

Maou hesitated for a second, but Kisaki ignored him and took Alas Ramus from his arms. Seeing

Alas Ramus give a big grin in Kisaki’s arms, he let out a sigh of relief. However,

“Chii-chan, come to the staff room for a bit. Maa-kun, you too, when you’re done taking her to her seat.”

At those words, his blood pressure dropped sharply.

Chiho seemed to have a similar reaction. Kisaki walked crisply towards the staff room, followed by a grave-faced Chiho.

“...I apologize. Perhaps I was too shallow in my thinking.”

Suzuno apologized as she watched and felt the obviously tense atmosphere. However, she still did not understand what was happening.

“Seriously!... is what I’d like to say, but you two did this with the best intentions for Alas Ramus in mind, so I’m not going to complain to you. The A/C doesn’t blow directly on those seats over there, so just pick one and wait there.

Suzuno looked in the direction Maou pointed at, and then back at Maou again.

“I thought you would be more angry.”

“Huh? Why would I be angry? Well, looks like it didn’t turn out well, but you were just trying to help me in the end, so I should be thanking you. Sorry about all this.” said Maou earnestly as he looked directly into Suzuno’s eyes.  
“...Humph, the demon king acting like an admirable being.”

Suzuno could not look back at his sincere eyes, so she avoided eye contact by pouting and looking away. Why should the king of all demons thank her honestly over and over again?

“Why shouldn’t the demon king be admirable? Anyway, just go take a seat over there and...”

As Maou frowned at Suzuno’s reaction,

“Fu...! Oh the wretched, scorching heat of the third hour after midday that robs me of my senses! The time has come for me to cool my heart by receiving the gift of a luscious soft-serve from the beautiful goddess!! Oh, my beloved goddess! I have once again come into your presence at this hour to deliver you my love!”

The noisy pervert entered the restaurant, sprouting perverted noises and making noisy, perverted gestures.

The man was none other than Mitsuki Sarue, the manager of the Hatagaya Station Kentucky, also known as Archangel Sariel, who had resolved to become a fallen angel when faced with Kisaki's beauty.

When Chiho had said that he ate every meal there every day, that apparently included snack time as well.

Sariel actually had a handsome face, which was his only redeeming quality. He scanned the restaurant quickly with his deep, violet eyes.

And then, he found the beautiful goddess to whom he had eternally dedicated himself in front of the restaurant's staff room.

And also the existence that said goddess held in her arms.

“Ngah!”



Letting out a strange cry, Sariel froze, his body colder than the soft-serve he had come for.

“He really did grow fat.”

Only a few days had passed since Suzuno had last saw Sariel. However, in just that short period of time, the somewhat short angel’s cheeks and neck had grown unnatural bulges.

The sound of Suzuno’s voice alerted Sariel to Maou and Suzuno’s presences, and he turned his head toward them like a broken puppet.

“Have the heavens forsaken me?”

Sariel asked a pointless question.

“Is this... divine retribution from God for abandoning my duty? Has my eternal goddess’s heart... been won by another man, and she responded to him, and is that the manifestation of their love!?”

Seeing that Sariel was having a very obvious misunderstanding, Maou had no idea how to respond.

“Ehh, I’ll leave him to you.”

And he decided to delegate that task to someone else.

“What? He-hey!”

Maou ran away and followed Kisaki and Chiho to the staff room before Suzuno had a chance to object.

“Crestia Bell! Is this a dream!? Tell me that this is a dream! If this is because of the wrongs I have done in the past, I repent for everything! I may have been fickle with women, but this time, I am completely dedicated! Please, listen to my confessions and ask for God’s forgiveness on my behalf!”

“Why is an archangel such as yourself asking to perform a confession to a human clergywoman, sir!?”

Even if they had once been enemies, he was an archangel whom the clergy treated like a god. She could not stop herself from speaking politely, but the archangel who had came down to the human world was, despite common belief, as endlessly selfish as the demon king himself.

“So this is what was meant in this morning’s horoscope that I would have terribly bad luck! Oh,

God, why! Why have you given me this cruel trial!?”

Suzuno got a headache just from imagining what the confessions of a womanizing archangel whose mood fluctuated with the horoscopes would be like. And as a woman, she wanted nothing to do with an confession that would confirm what she was imagining, either.

“Sariel-sama, you have no knowledge of the origin of that little child over there, correct?”

Suzuno nonchalantly asked a leading question, taking advantage of the fact that Kisaki was holding Alas Ramus.

“Yes... but how I wish that *I* were her origin...”

Sariel broke down into feeble sobs and gave an uncensored answer. However, with that one sentence, Suzuno verified that Sariel had no direct relation to Alas Ramus.

“...Very well. Please, tell me of your sins..”

Suzuno resolved to hear Sariel out in order to extract more information from him, but as she imagined what “confessions of sins” she might hear, her headache grew worse. “...Well then,”

Maou and Chiho stood next to each other, and jumped at her voice. Their stomachs dropped as they braced themselves for what yelling might come.

“How old is she?”

However, the first question Kisaki asked was not at all what they were expecting. Kisaki rocked Alas Ramus back and forth gently, naturally handling the little child.

Maou and China reflexively looked at each other.

“Three...? No, she’s not big enough for that. I’m guessing she’s a little younger than two? Right?”

“Huh? Oh-um, yes. You’re probably right.”

“Probably? You haven’t even asked her parents how old she is?”

They would have loved to know that themselves, but seeing as her parents were still a mystery, there was nothing they could do.

“Well, I guess that’s not that strange. If someone asked me how old my niece is, I wouldn’t be sure either. It’d help me remember when she starts attending grade school, though.”

However, Kisaki did not press the question further. As a matter of fact, she answered it herself.

“Relax. I’m not here to yell at you. Besides, there’s a little child here.”

However, any human being who would be able to relax upon hearing that would certainly be an oddity.

“I’m going to have to ask you this awkward question, but this child really isn’t yours, right?”

“Of course not! ...but I wish she was...”

Chiho’s quiet mumbling that expressed her true feelings didn’t escape Kisaki’s ears.

“You’re free to wish for whatever you want, but you should keep something else in mind as well.” Said Kisaki as smiled and continued to play with Alas Ramus, all the while maintaining her authoritative tone that would subjugate even the demon king himself.

“You two aren’t dating, right?”

“Ri-right.”

“That’s... right.”

Chiho turned to Maou, who denied it immediately, and also nodded.

Kisaki laughed with a slight frown as the young man and woman replied. “Did you think I was going to lecture you on bringing romance or family matters into the workplace? But really, I wouldn’t have to give you this lecture if you two were actually seeing each other in the first place.”

“Huh?”

Maou answered with a silly voice as he was caught completely off-guard.

“It doesn’t matter whether it was Maa-kun who asked Chii-chan to help or Chii-chan volunteered. But look, have you really thought about what everyone else and society might think of a high school girl going to and from a man’s house to take care of his baby?”

As the conversation took a turn that neither of them were expecting at all, the two made no attempt to hide their surprise.

“Bu-but, there’s no one else Maou-san can count on, and there’s seriously nothing going on between us...”

“Chii-chan, you might not understand this yet, but society is shallow and quick to draw conclusions. Rumors spread faster than light, and even worse, they have no single form.” “...!”

“!!”

Chiho tried to say something at the moment Kisaki shifted her eyes to Alas Ramus, but Maou stopped her right in time.

It was unclear whether Kisaki saw that from the corner of her eyes as she tickled Alas Ramus’s cheek with her finger. Alas Ramus laughed cheerfully and said,

“yuu smell like daddy!”

And she smelled Kisaki’s hand happily.

“Really? Just like your daddy?”

Kisaki also answered cheerfully.

“And when some young people who are just as shallow as the rest of society are told something like this, their answers are always the same. ‘What does

society know about us!?’ Just the fact that you aren’t reacting like that shows that you two are already mature for your age.”

Kisaki placed Alas Ramus on her knees, wrapped her hands around her belly, and spun around in her chair slowly. Alas Ramus smiled again.

Watching them, Maou lowered the hand he had used to stop Chiho and said quietly,

“I don’t know nearly enough about the world or anything else to say something like that.”

Kisaki stopped the chair’s spinning with a little squeak, and smiled as she lifted Alas Ramus up high.

“Miaaaa!ahaha!”

Alas Ramus let out a fun cry, most likely from enjoying that.

“By being able to say that, you’re finally halfway there to becoming a man.”

Kisaki returned Alas Ramus to Maou, looked at the clock in the staff room, and relaxed her shoulder.

“Maa-kun, you can take off for today. It’s a little early, but we’re not so busy that having one less person working would make a difference.”

“Uh-really? But...”

“You’re her ‘daddy,’ right? Then you should value the time you spend with her more than some measly future hourly wage. I’ll consider your request for more hours.”

After saying that, Kisaki put on her crew cap on and quickly left the staff room.

“...Maou-san, what did she mean by more hours?”

Asked Chiho, with an unsatisfied look on her face.

“I’ve got another family member I have to support now, so I have to work harder. I might even have to send Alas Ramus to school someday.”

Maou played with Alas Ramus in his arms, and answered in a way that made it difficult to tell how serious he was.

“Are you really going to take in Alas Ramus-chan?”

“Well, I’m not exactly taking her in.”

Replied Maou, as he poked Alas Ramus’s forehead.

“I just want to take care of her until the mystery is solved, that’s all. I’ll give her back as soon as her real parents show up.”

Chiho noticed that Maou had also been preoccupied with her forehead when he had originally been thinking about whether to take Alas Ramus in.

“Hey, Chii-chan. A little while ago, your mom and dad said it was okay for you to come to my place, right?”

“...Yes.”

Chiho stiffened.

She knew that Maou respected Kisaki as a great member of society. Whether or nor that was acceptable for a demon king from an alternate world aside, Chiho feared that Kisaki’s lecture had made him change his mind. However,

“I know what Kisaki-san just said, but I’m asking you despite that.... could I put my trust in you for a little while longer?”

“Of co... huh?”

Chiho had fully expected him to ask her to stop helping, and her eyes widened when the words that came out of his mouth were the complete opposite.

“For the time being, everything is normal and peaceful, but Emi and Suzuno are originally my enemies, so... what I’m trying to say is, Chii-chan, you’re the only human I know who I can trust completely.”

“...”

“And I know I’m being unfair, asking you this while still not giving you an answer, but um, there might be some bumps and troubles down the road, but if you could help me out here, I’d really appreciate it.”

“...”

“...Chii-chan?”

Chiho just had her mouth open with a blank look for a while, but then,

“...He-hey!? Wh-why are you crying!? Chii-chan? Huh? Did I say something wrong!?”

A tear rolled down her cheek.

Maou panicked as Chiho's reaction caught him completely off-guard. Chiho finally noticed her tears after seeing Maou's reaction, and took out a handkerchief to wipe her face.

“Um, so-sorry, I, I was um, happy...”

“I-I’m so sorry! It was my mistake! I’m older than you and a demon king and asking to rely on you, Chii-chan, I shouldn’t have... wait, what?”

“I’m happy because you said you trusted me, Maou-san.”

“Huh? What? Huh? You’re ha... wait, then, wh-why are you crying?”

Chiho smiled, while a cloud of question marks appeared over Maou’s head.  
“Ehehe, sorry. That’s just how humans are.”

“I-I don’t get it... but, er...”

“I know... that you can’t give me an answer... right away. No matter what your answer might be... I’ll wait for it... so...”

Chiho fought back her resurging tears and took Alas Ramus's hand. "chii-neecha?"

"I'll do my best to help you, Maou-san."

"O-Okay. Um, sorry 'bout that. Thanks."

"Of course!"

This time, Chiho gave a great, big smile. Maou had no idea how to react, and pretended to readjust his crew cap.

"Oh, that's right, Maa-kun, in that drawer, there's..."

Kisaki chose that exact moment to walk back in.

"!!"

Watching Maou and Chiho freeze in place, Kisaki drew her eyebrows together.

"...That's it, I'm not hiring another female crew member for a long time. Geez..."

She was not someone they could play it off as a joke with. Even the equal opportunity employment law was powerless against the Kisaki law.

Kisaki walked in quickly with a sour expression and took out an envelope from the office desk.

“I got these from a newspaper seller, but I’d never use them, so I was going to give them to you.

But...”

Kisaki sighed, then looked at Maou and Chiho.

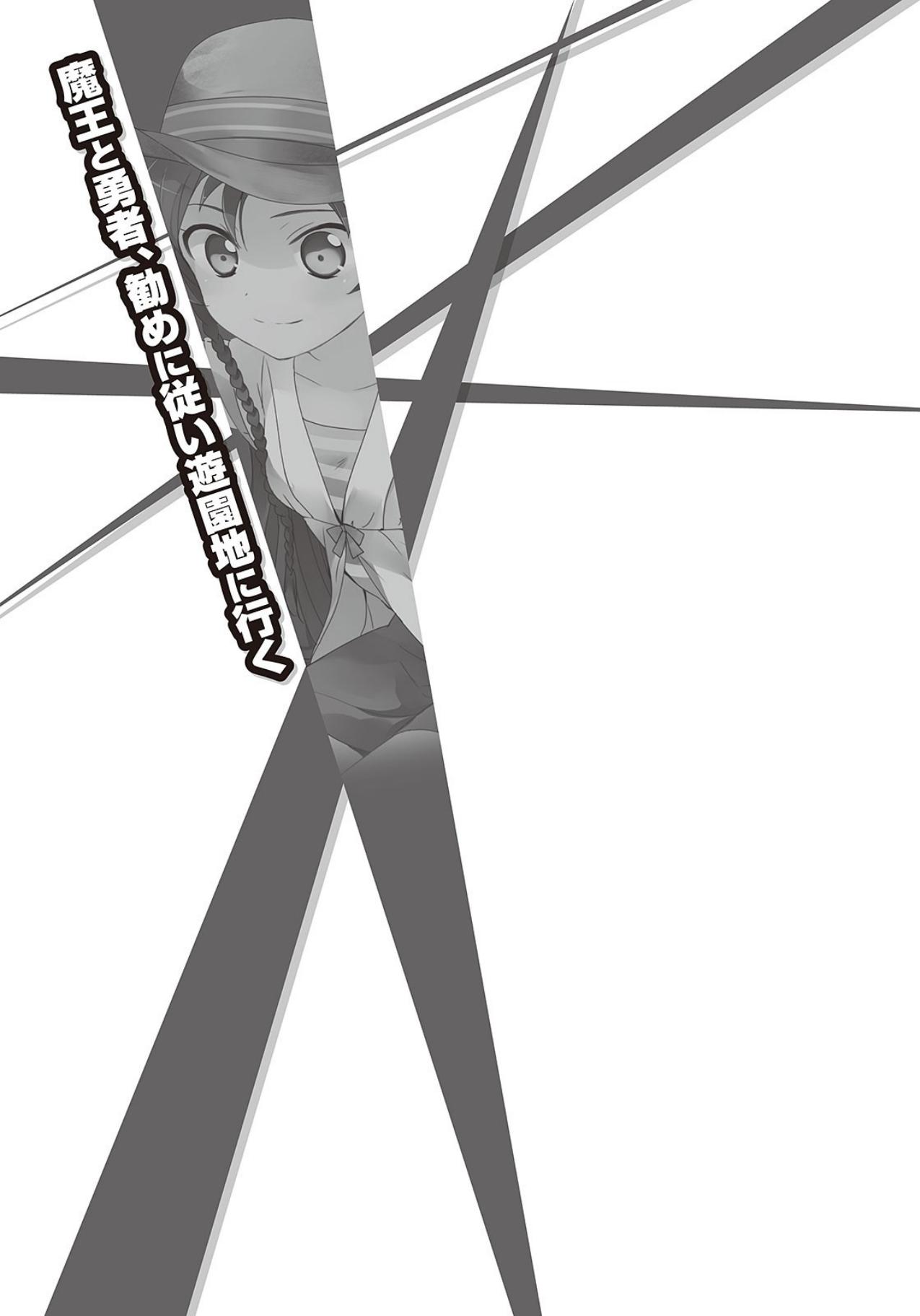
“You understand what I just said, right?”

Said Kisaki, who proceeded to put the envelope on Maou’s head and left again.

Maou and Chiho gave a great sigh after the door closed. Chiho took the envelope from on top of his head, and after looking at each other, they took out its contents. And what came out was...

## **Chapter 3: The Demon King and Hero Heed Advice and Go to an Amusement Park**

魔王と勇者、魔の正せり悪魔を正せり



“Emi, did something bad happen to you?”

“Huh?”

“You’ve been frowning aaaall the time since this morning.”

Emi put her hand on her forehead as her coworker, Rika Suzuki, pointed that out.

“Did you get into a fight with Maou-san and his people again?”

Emi was taken completely off-guard as the question nailed her straight through the chest.

“Wh-why would you think that!?”

“Because whenever you’ve been worrying about anything recently, it’s always been about them.”

“No-no! That’s not true!”

“Really? I don’t remember you worrying about anything in particular before you started talking about Maou-san.”

Unthinkable.

As the hero whose ultimate mission was to eradicate the demon king, Emi had always maintained her vigilance and will to fight. “I’ve never lived a relaxed, worry-free life!” thought Emi.

“Now that I think about it, whenever I ate with you, you were so happy that you’d make me forget all my worries. And whenever we went out together, you looked like you were thoroughly enjoying yourself. You’ve only started making that serious expression very recently.”

“Ugh...”

The lies Emi told herself in her heart fell apart in an instant.

There actually was a time when Japan’s various cuisines and cultures had filled her with new wonders and changed her priorities. In particular, the entire world of Ente Islan cuisine combined could not even hold a candle against the variation and quality of Japanese cuisine.

“Oh, come to think of it, you did say one time that you couldn’t sleep at night because the A/C wasn’t working and it was too hot.”

“...”

Emi fell face down on her desk.

She had been in Japan for a little over a year. Questioning just how worryfree a life she had been living in, Emi wallowed in self-hatred.

“Oh, and you also complained about how you had too many shifts and couldn’t fit the apartment gas inspection appointment into your schedule.”

“Rika...you win. Please stop killing me.”

“Hm? Really? Oh, a call.”

A signal came on in Rika’s booth, keeping her busy for a while as Emi groaned.

“So, what is it? What are you fighting about this time?”

Rika finished her phone call, lifted up the microphone on her headset, and leaned over the booth wall.

“Why are you acting like you’re having fun?”

Emi replied with resentful eyes, but Rika was not the type to be phased by something like that.

“Listening to you always cures my boredom.”

Speaking openly like this was one of Rika’s positive traits, yet it was also a negative trait at the same time.

“Besides, I can’t just let a friend struggle with her troubles on her own, riiight?”

“Your honest answer right before that and your tone just now aren’t helping.”

Emi gave a strained smile.

“This time’s trouble isn’t something I can just ignore.”

“Go on, go on.”

“There’s this little child.”

Rika placed her elbow on the desk and her face on her hand, nodded, and asked completely naturally,

“A child between you and Maou-san?”

“That’s just what the child is saying... huh!!?”

Emi did not grasp the situation Rika had put her in, and instinctively tried to deny it with all her might, but by doing so she dug her own grave.

However, not even Rika had been expecting that answer. She let her head fall off of her hand, and looked at Emi with wide eyes.

“Wait, what, seriously!?”

“N-no! It’s not like that, um, uh, well, that’s what it is, but it’s not like that!!”

“What are you talking about? Hey, come on, calm down.”

Emi breathed heavily, having been told to relax by the person who had been teasing her in the first place.

“...Will you listen to me seriously?”

“I was serious from the beginning.”

Replied Rika blazenly. Emi gave her a light glare, but calmed down and began talking.

“...There’s a little child at Maou’s place. He... is looking after the child for someone else.”

“Maou-san’s relative?”

“I don’t know the details.”

Emi gave a vague answer after deciding that she didn’t want to involve Rika too much.

“Do you remember meeting that girl in the yukata? I met the child when I was visiting her.”

“Uuuh, she had a really rare last name... that’s right, Kamazuki-san, was it? Suzuno Kamazukisan.”

“Yep. I ended up talking to him because she lives next door. So that’s why I have to see him even if I don’t want to. And then,”

Emi also placed her elbow on her desk and her head on her hand, and let out a sigh.

“That child thinks I’m the mother, and I don’t know what to do.”

“Huh?”

Rika stuck her head forward with a shocked expression.

“A little child I’ve never met before started calling me ‘Mommy.’”

“You mean, she’s attached to you to the point that you’re like a mother to her?”

“No, she’s at a level where she’s completely mistaking me for her mother.”

Emi shook her head and looked at Rika, who had been joking around but now looked completely serious.

“That... really is a problem. Not just attached to you, but completely mistaking you for her mother...” muttered Rika, frowning and folding her arms. She leaned back in her chair.

“This might be a bit morbid, but could she have lost her mother right after she was born?”

“Huh?”

Emi’s eyes widened upon hearing something much more serious than she had expected.

“If her mother was usually around her, then there’s no way she’d mistake some other woman for her mother after being separated from her for only two or three days. So going off of that, I thought maybe either you and her mother look alike to the point of being identical twins, or maybe she has no memories of her mother.”

“No-...”

Emi was about to reply, “No way,” but she stopped herself.

She had no memories of her mother as well, and until recently, she hadn’t even had any idea that her mother was still alive.

Emi recalled that when she was young, she had often mistaken different women in her village to be her mother.

To begin with, they had no confirmation that Alas Ramus even had a “previous family.” But then, could Alas Ramus saying, “mommy, are you leevin me again?” mean that she was separated from her mother for some unknown reason?

“Did you think of something?”

“...Hmm, I don’t know. I don’t really understand it, but...”

“Mm, well, this is something to do with Maou-san’s people, isn’t it? I don’t think you have anything to worry about.”

Possibly because Emi had started to think very seriously, Rika tried to lift the mood by talking in a lighthearted voice.

“I might be overthinking it, and besides, we outsiders can’t do much about it anyway. If you don’t plan on seeing this through to the end, then there’s no need for you to butt into their business,” said Rika as she patted Emi’s shoulder. The chime that signaled the end of the shift rang, and Emi lifted her head.

“...But I already said that I’d stop by on the way back today.”

“Hey! So you’re in on this after all, Emi!” Rika interjected yet again.

“It-it was in the heat of the moment...”

“If you’re just being stubborn with Maou-san’s group, you should stop it right now.”

As always, Rika knew exactly what to say to hit Emi in her weak spots.

“N-no, that’s not what I’m doing... but... but it’s not just that...”

Even with Suzuno next door, and putting Alas Ramus’s true identity aside, a baby being in Demon King Castle was not something Emi was comfortable with.

Besides...

“I’m not acting out of pity or anything, but I wanted the child to spend her time here as happily as possible...”

Rika looked at the flustered Emi while standing, took off her headset, and smiled with a bit of a frown while shrugging.

“You’re so kind, Emi. Even at your own expense.”

Emi replied, “Because I’m the hero” in her heart.

“Either way, we won’t know what was good or bad for children until they grow up, so why don’t you try doing what you think is best? Assuming Maou-san and others are okay with it.”

Rika however, made a complex expression as if she was adding a large “but” to the end of that sentence.

“Emi, you’ve never done anything like taking care of someone else’s pet for a while, right?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Even feeding it for a day or two will get you attached to it. Don’t get too attached to her and get depressed when her real parents come by to pick her up, okay?”

“...I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Hm! Very well! Then let’s get out of here, for your beloved child is waiting!”

“Rika!!”

Emi shooed away the joking Rika, and took her headset off as well.

“Her real parents, huh...” wondered Emi as she put her headset on its designated spot and stood up.

“Hey, hey, Emi, if you’re trying to create fun memories, how about this?”

Once Emi entered the locker room, Rika, who had already changed, called out to her with her purse in her hand. As Emi came up to Rika, she was handed a small piece of paper.

“I didn’t know this until now, but Docodemo is funding it, so there’s an employee discount.”

\*\*\*\*

Six long, skinny pieces of paper lay on top of Demon King Castle’s table.

“...”

“...”

“wha’sis? wha’sis?”

Maou, Alas Ramus, and Emi stood around the table and looked at the papers in prolonged silence.

“Even for a coincidence, we sure got a lot of them.”

Chiho looked on from the side, and struggled to decide what expression to make.

On the table lay a combination of six tickets and coupons to the amusement park “Tokyo Big Egg Town” attached to Tokyo Big Egg, located in Bunkyo District.

**\*\*Tokyo Big Egg is an nickname of the Tokyo Dome.**

The envelope that Maou had received from Kisaki contained a single one-day pass for free rides throughout the park, as well as a pair of discount coupons for more one-day passes, given out as a newspaper subscription sign-up bonus. On the other hand, what Emi had received from Rika were three corporate discount coupons for one-day passes. However, the discount rates for those three coupons were better than the two from Kisaki.

In other words, both Kisaki and Rika had suggested making memories between the three of them, parents and child.

Logically, they couldn't just keep Alas Ramus locked up in a six-tatami apartment, and besides, Ashiya would die from exhaustion sooner or later.

“Well, why not? An amusement park is an recreational facility, is it not? A place where children can enjoy themselves. You should go with the

maximized savings from these tickets and coupons,” stated Suzuno. However, there was a problem with that.

“fun time with mommy and daddy!”

Alas Ramus was already in family vacation mode.

And in this case, the family included Maou and Emi.

Kisaki’s case was completely coincidental, but there seemed to be an ulterior motive behind Rika’s action of giving Emi a set of three coupons.

“...sigh.”

In the suffocating atmosphere, Maou nodded as if he was resigning himself to something. Hearing that, Emi shivered slightly.

“So since you brought something like this here, I take it that you’ve made up your mind, right?”

“A-about what...?”

“Hey, Alas Ramus, let’s go somewhere fun together, but is it okay if Mommy doesn’t come?”

“no! we all go!”

It was a soul-filled answer that would shake any person’s heart.

Alas Ramus took off from Maou’s lap and ran towards Emi, in the process nearly knocked over the barley tea on the table. Fortunately, Ashiya rushed to move it out of the way just in time.

“Then, how about you go with Mommy and I don’t go? Is that okay?”

“no!!” she said emphatically, then pouted.

“...and that’s what she says. If anyone has a good idea, please convince Alas Ramus right away.

You have Emi’s and my full support.”

“Is Chiho Sasaki really okay with thiwhaaaa!”

Urushihara tried to tease Chiho unnecessarily from inside the closet, but Suzuno, who had been standing next to the sliding screen, pounded on it to silence him.

“Ho-however, the demon King, Emilia, and Alas Ramus... the three of them are...”

As Ashiya was giving his honest advice, the one to express an opposing opinion was actually Chiho.

“...Yusa-san, will you please go with them?”

“Huh? Chiho-chan?”

Even Ashiya and Suzuno were surprised, and raised their heads.

“Here, why don’t you just think of it as making sure Maou-san doesn’t do anything weird?”

“...”

“If you think about it, Maou-san’s never been to an amusement park, right? Wouldn’t you be worried if Maou-san, who’s only ever been from Sasazuka to Shinjuku, takes Alas Ramus-chan and goes around Tokyo on his own with her?”

Maou wasn’t that clueless, but realizing that Chiho didn’t really think of him that way, he remained silent.

“Besides, we still don’t know why Alas Ramus-chan is in Japan, right? If someone evil like Sarielsan had something to do with her, and someone targets Alas Ramus-chan while they’re on their own, would you really be okay with Maou-san being killed by someone other than you?”

“...Chiho-dono, you really should consider a career in law.”

Suzuno muttered in a voice that no one else could hear.

While they still didn’t know whether Alas Ramus was being targeted or not, the possibility that Chiho raised was not out of the question, either.

“But, Chiho-chan, you’re...”

“This isn’t about me. If you’re worried about Alas Ramus-chan, then let’s stay with her for as long as possible and aim for a ending that we can all be happy with.”

Chiho said firmly, placed her hands on her hips, and looked down at Emi and Maou. Emi hung her head as she agreed begrudgingly.

“Chiho-dono!”

Sasazuka Town was already dark. A voice called out to Chiho as she was heading home. “Huh? Suzuno-san?”

Suzuno ran towards Chiho, her traditional Japanese sandals making a refreshing, rhythmic sound.

“What’s wrong? Did I leave something behind?”

“No, that is not it,”

Sweeping her hair on her sweaty forehead, Suzuno asked a question.

“I do not know if I should be asking you this... Are you really alright with it?”

“Alright with what?”

“With what...? Um, about the demon king and Emilia going on an outing together...”

“Ooh... I guess we should worry about Maou-san being cut down after getting in a fight with

Yusa-san...”

“No, well, yes, but that is not what I was concerned about.”

Chiho smiled as she felt affection towards Suzuno, who fumbled for words even though she had run after her for the sole purpose of saying something. “I’m just a little worried, that’s all. But I know Yusa-san doesn’t really hate Maou-san and the others as much as she says she does.”

Suzuno thought that if Emi would probably faint if she heard that, but she did not disagree, either.

“Besides, Maou-san said he trusted me.”

“What?”

“...Hehe, it’s nothing.”

Chiho put her index finger on her mouth.



“Besides, I’m not the one you should be worried about right now. Yusa-san is going home for the night too, right?”

“Ye-yes. As expected, she said she does not have the resolve to stay over...”

“Then I think there might be a big commotion after Yusa-san goes home, because of Ashiyasan.”

“Because of Alciel?”

Suzuno tilted her head.

“My lord, this is dangerous! Please reconsider!”

When Suzuno returned, Chiho’s prediction had already come true.

“Hey, calm down. Even Emi wouldn’t cut me down in public!”

“Even if Emilia were not dangerous, if the worst case scenario that Sasakisan hypothesized were to come to fruition and Alas Ramus is targeted by someone...”

“I said, calm down! If that’s the case, then it doesn’t matter whether we stay here or go out! Are we going to be safe from an Ente Islan assailant by

hunkering down here in this run-down apartment with our door and windows locked? Huh? If we just lock ourselves in here cowering from some unknown enemy, we'll die of heat exhaustion in this oven long before we're attacked!"

"Even an ant can deliver the final blow that destroys a castle wall!"

"You got it backwards! It's like we're trying to defend against bullets with paper shields! And what if we stay in here so long that Alas Ramus turns into another Urushihara!?"

"They are fundamentally different! Alas Ramus never fails to bring her plate to me after she finishes eating, and always makes sure to say, 'thanks for the meal'!"

"Then are you saying Urushihara is below Alas Ramus!?"

"It is exactly as you say, my lord!"

"Urushihara!?"

"Neither of you are making any sense!!"

Suzuno's head began to hurt as she heard everything through the open windows.

“What idiotic argument are you having? I can hear everything outside.”  
“suzu-neecha, wehcome back!”

Not paying attention to the childlike arguments of the adults, Alas Ramus was playing by tearing pieces of the newspaper at the front door. She raised her arm towards Suzuno enthusiastically. “Ye-yes. Thank you... I’m back.”

Perhaps due to not being used to being called Suzu-neecha, Suzuno blushed again.

“suzu-neecha, look! sefi-ott!”

“Hm? What is it?”

Alas Ramus pulled on the sleeve of Suzuno’s yukata and showed her a color page from an old newspaper with a minivan ad.

The ad tried to promote the minivan’s high storage capacity with a picture of many colorful balloons coming out of its trunk and a caricaturized city in the background.

“sefi-ott!”

“Hm...? Ye-yes. I see.”

Suzuno answered half-heartedly, not knowing what she was saying, and then,

“Where is Emilia? Did she go home already?” She asked Maou.

“Now that you mention it, I think she left right after Chii-chan did. You didn’t run into her on the way back?”

“No I did not... but I am surprised that Alas Ramus did not cry.”

“She promised Emi that she’d be a good girl. We’ll proceed with the plan this coming Sunday.”

“My Lord, please reconsider...”

“keteh, nezah, malkoo... no bina. daddy, no bina!”

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

Alas Ramus seemed to have really taken a liking to the minivan ad, and called Maou as she banged on the paper over and over again.

Suzuno watched the two of them, and then whispered to Ashiya.

“...If you are that concerned, why not just follow them?”

However, Ashiya turned pale at Suzuno’s suggestion for some unknown reason.

“We still have coupons left over. They will suffice for tailing them.

“Ho-however...”

Ashiya began groaning and suddenly gave a worried look.

“My lord has the complimentary ticket, and even if Emilia were to pay for herself, Alas Ramus is a child, so her discount amount is proportionately less, and even if it’s half price, a round trip on the train would be... and depending on the time, they might have to eat out as well. If that’s the case...”

Suzuno did not need to be a psychic to understand what Ashiya was concerned about.

“Take a closer look, Alciel. This amusement park has no admission fee system. You only need to pay for the attractions you ride. If your only purpose is to follow them, you only need worry about the round trip traveling expenses.”

“Ugh... I... I see.”

“Then why don’t you go? I’ll watch the house, like always.”

As soon as Ashiya began to seriously consider it, Urushihara called out in a light tone from the closet. However, the sound of his voice caused Ashiya to grimace yet again.

“No! I can’t! Urushihara, you vermin! You’re plotting to shop on ‘Jungle’ for clothes while I’m out for an extended period of time, aren’t you!”

“...”

Urushihara’s silence seemed to suggest that Ashiya was spot-on.

“If you wish to go, go. I will keep Lucifer under my watch.”

“Hey!”

“...Why are you doing this?”

A cry of objection came from the other side of the sliding screen. Ashiya glared at Suzuno suspiciously.

Meanwhile, Maou silently picked up the scraps of newspaper that Alas Ramus had spread everywhere.

“I live here as well. If some trouble really were to occur, do you really think Lucifer by himself would be of any use?”

“...Ugh... why you...”

“Hey, hey, Ashiya? Why are you acting like she just hit you where it really hurts?”

“It is indeed possible that someone related to Alas Ramus really were to appear, but they may not necessarily be someone sinister like Chiho-dono suggested. If her real parents were to come just to pick her up, all we would have to do would be to peacefully allow Alas Ramus to go where she belongs. On the other hand, there is a possibility that our fears become a reality and someone who wishes harm on Alas Ramus arrives. If that were the case, they would most likely come here to Villa Rosa Sasazuka, where a gate has already opened once. Do you really think Lucifer would be able to take appropriate counter-measures by himself if that were to happen?”

“Ugh-mgmgmg...”

“Heeey, Ashiyaaa, tell her to take it baaack, come ooon, say somethiiing.”

“Well, you do not need to make a decision until the day comes.”

“Ughmgmgmgmgmgmgmgmg...”

Suzuno moved on from the overheating Ashiya and Urushihara, who used all of Ashiya’s privileges and carried none of his responsibilities. She turned to Maou. “In your case, you can depend on Emilia to protect you.”

“Mm, yeah. Plus, there’ll be a lot of people around, so depending on what happens, I might get my powers back, too.”

Maou seemed to be listening to the conversation even while looking after Alas Ramus.

“hoh, tiferez!”

And Alas Ramus continued to wave the minivan ad around.

“Well, all the worrying in the world won’t help us until something actually happens. So I’m just going to worry about the most realistic situation, that these peaceful days are going to continue.”

“Hm? What do you mean by that?”

“What do you think I mean?”

Maou patted Alas Ramus’s head.

Alas Ramus had been preoccupied with the minivan ad the entire time, but once she noticed Maou’s hand, she tried her hardest to reach around her head to touch it.

“I’m going to work hard, that’s all. Once we’re out of food to eat, it’s all over.”

“Uuugh... give me a break.”

As soon as Emi got home, she collapsed on the floor by the door without even taking her shoes off.

Alas Ramus might be an adorable little baby, but she was not related to her in any way whatsoever.

“What should I do...?”

Groaning, Emi tugged her discarded purse towards her by the handle and took off her sandals by hooking the straps on the door step.

“...Why am I being so weak!? I’m just going to pretend to be Alas Ramus’s mother, and I’m definitely not the demon king’s wi-wi-wi-...”

She could not bear to finish the word, even if no one else was around her.

“Not in a million years!!”

Avoiding the most important word of her monologue even though no one was there to hear her, Emi finished her sentence and then hung her head. She then brushed away her hair, which was sticking to her because of her sweat, from her neck and forehead.

“...Maybe I should stop by the beauty salon...”

As Emi muttered unconsciously under her breath, her cellphone suddenly began playing the *Raging General*\*\* theme loudly from her purse.

**\*\*Raging General is a spoof on Rampaging General, a Japanese historical drama that ran from 1978 to 2002.**

“Uuuh, ‘ellooooo? It’s meeee, Emeradaaa.”

“Huh!? Emmy!? I’m not looking forward to it at all!!”

“Wha-what are you talking abooout, all of a suddeen? Oh, are you still workiiing?”

Emerada Etuva, Emi’s long-time comrade, asked back over the phone, perplexed at Emi’s out-ofcontext defense.

“Oh, um, it’s nothing. I-I’m fine, I’m fine.”

“A-are you suuuure? You don’t sound like you areeee.”

Even though Emerada had a very spaced-out way of talking, she was also very sharp and perceptive. She wasn’t the highest-ranked official who served directly underneath the ruler of the greatest nation in the Western Continent for no reason.

“I’m calling you because I was woorrieeeeed.”

“I-I’m working hard! I haven’t forgotten my mission as the hero, either!”

Emi could not help trying to justify herself even more.

“...Okaaaay, I’m relieved noooow.”

“Huh?”

“My ‘reed’ told meee that the church was making suspicious moves agaiiin, so I wanted to make sure you were okaaaay.”

“Reed” was most likely a spy code word for something. And the suspicious move referred to Suzuno and her party.

“Oh, don’t worry. Someone from the church did come into contact with me, but unlike Orba, she was a reasonable, level-headed person.”

Emi explained Suzuno’s appearance and Sariel’s attack in a nutshell.

Emerada was wary of a high-ranked authority from the church appearing near Emi at first, but she also seemed to think that not all of the church was their enemy and appeared to be satisfied with the summary of Suzuno’s appearance and the incident.

“I’m gonna be honest with yoooou, but isn’t it dangerooous? That angel is still there, riiight?” “That’s true... but, well, even in Japan, there are powerful people. We shouldn’t have to worry about Sariel for the time being.”

Of course, the powerful person Emi was referring to was the manager of the Hatagaya Station MgRonald, Kisaki.

“We never did find out why they were after the holy sword, though.”

“Hmm, come to think of it, we’ve never really thought about the origin of the holy sword either. The story of how it was entrusted to us from the heavens in ancient times is also just what the church says. I’ll look into it as well.”

“Thanks. But you have your responsibilities to your country as well, so don’t overwork yourself. Is the restoration going well?”

“People won’t stop complaining about it, so don’t ask me.”

Before the demon king army arrived, the five continents of Ente Isla had by no means been constantly at peace with each other. Now that the central continent, which served as the commercial center, was no longer functioning, all the other nations were engaged in political warfare in order to take the place of the old Isla Centrum.

“But who would have thought, that a Judge of the church nicknamed ‘Grim Reaper Death

Scythe Bell’ would be such a little, cute person? It’d be nice if she’d join our side.”

Emerada said lightly, stopping the conversation from taking a dark turn.

“You of all people shouldn’t be labeling someone ‘little and cute.’”

“I do get mistaken for a lost new recruit soldier or a little child a looooot.”

Like Suzuno, Emerada had a small build and child-like face, which caused her a fair amount of trouble. Her appearance did not reflect the dignity and duty required of the Palace Magician of the great nation Saint Aire’s in the Western Continent.

“So, was that why you called me?”

“Oooh, that’s riiight, that’s part of the reasooon, but I had something to ask yooou. Did Lailah come over to your siiide?”

“Huh?”

Emi was surprised by the sudden shift of topic in the conversation.

“Just a little while agooo, she said she was going to the market right outside the castle, but she hasn’t been back siiince. She said herself that she couldn’t move about freelyyyy, so I thought if she were to go somewhere, it’d probably be to where you aaaaare.”

“Well, to begin with, I don’t even know what my mother looks like... huh? Wait a second, you were living with my mother?”

“It’s not so much living together... um, I don’t know if I should say this to you, buuuut, it’s more like she’s totally mooching off of meee.”

“Oh... I see.”

Emi couldn’t think of any other reaction.

“A-anyway, aside from Bell and Sariel, no one’s come over to this side... oh.”

As Emi was about to finish speaking, she raised her voice again.

“U-um, I don’t know if this is related, but...”

Emi made up her mind and told her about Alas Ramus. Of course, she left out the part where she and Maou were supposedly the mother and father.

“A little giiirl... in the shape of an appleee, is it? I’ve never heard of any person or demon like thaaat, and aside from Crestia Bell, I haven’t sensed any big Gates opening on the western contineeeent.”

“I see... I thought as much.”

Ente Isla was a large world, and there were countless people who could use Gates. Emerada might be an incredibly powerful figure in her nation, but she couldn't possibly sense everything. "Sorry. I thought it might be related, but don't worry about it. Either way, I'll be careful. But even if I say that, there's not much I can really do the way I am now."

"Noooo, it's okaaaay. She's always been the independent, my-pace type of persooon, so she might even come back todaaay. I just thought that I should let you knoooow. I'll alsoooooo look into her without looking suspiciooous. That's aaaall."

"Uh-wait, Em-..."

Once Emerada finished saying that, she hung up quickly. Alas Ramus aside, Emi had never met

Lailah before. But since she didn't even know what Lailah looked like, there was nothing she could do even if she wanted to.

"...Oh well. Since it's my mother, I'm sure there's nothing to worry about."

Quickly arriving at that conclusion, Emi took off her sandals and entered her apartment.

She turned on her TV and A/C at the same time, and as she sat down in her chair,

“...Maybe... I should stop by the beauty salon after all. I don’t want to look exhausted,” Emi mumbled as she played with her front hair.

Coincidentally, the TV was showing a commercial for Tokyo Big Egg Town.

It was about some strange collaboration between a special effects hero show for little boys and a heroine anime for little girls.

\*\*\*

Four peaceful days had passed since then. The entire group prepared themselves for something related to Alas Ramus happening, but surprisingly, nothing had happened.

Emi, the only person who had leaked the knowledge about Alas Ramus to an “outsider,” was not contacted with any new information either.

The only changes possibly worth noting were that, perhaps finally responding to being compared to Alas Ramus, Urushihara had started to take his own dishes to the sink and splash some water on them, and that every resident of Demon King Castle became skilled at changing Alas Ramus’s diaper.

Perhaps the mindset that if nothing happened today, nothing would happen tomorrow either was proof of becoming too lax in this peaceful time, but days of childcare and working waited for no one.

However, too used to the peace or not, knowing the tricks to doing both childcare and work at the same time is essential to preventing eventual death by exhaustion. Suzuno was the only one who didn't have to worry about this problem, but even she had her limits.

In the end, four days of “nothing” had passed, and Sunday morning had arrived.

Maou and Ashiya were forced awake by Alas Ramus at seven in the morning.

She had remembered that Sunday was “a day out with Mommy.”

They were meeting up with Emi, who had reluctantly agreed, at 1 PM in the afternoon, at Tokyo Metro’s Kourakuen Station.

Emi couldn’t get out of her morning shift no matter how hard she tried.

Maou’s workload from the day they had decided to go to Tokyo Big Egg Town until the day of had pushed him to his limits.

According to Chiho and the others who worked the same shifts as him, his furious working resembled that of a six-armed, eight-faced, demonic Asura.

Even temporary shift managers had a pay scale, and Maou worked as hard as he could to increase his wages by even one yen.

The tradeoff was that he couldn't spend as much time with Alas Ramus, but Suzuno and Ashiya took turns taking her on walks and to MgRonald, so her mood was at an all-time high.

However, Emi hadn't shown herself in a while. Her only contact with Alas Ramus was through Suzuno's phone.

Alas Ramus was satisfied with just talking to Emi, since she knew it was her by her voice.

Perhaps she wasn't cynical towards Emi using a phone because she was still a little child. It was now nine in the morning after breakfast.

“daddyyy, ca’we go? ca’we go yet?”

Alas Ramus could not wait any longer, and pulled on Maou's sleeves over and over again. After telling her to wait each time she did so, Maou remembered something and put his hands on his knees.

“Oh, that's right. I've been working so much that I forgot all about it. Ashiya, I'm going out for a sec.”

“Where are you going, my lord?”

“To Hirose-san. I need to talk to him about my bicycle.”

Dullahan II, the bicycle that Suzuno had bought him, was brand-new and hadn’t even been used for a week yet. Why he needed to go have a talk about it was unclear.

“Because of this little girl.”

“ou?”

Alas Ramus tilted her head as she was suddenly patted on the head.

With the added benefit of making Alas Ramus happy, as she kept wanting to go out, Maou held her hand and headed towards Sasazuka in the morning.

The Bosatsu-Dori shopping district’s bicycle shop, Hirose Cycle Shop, was just about to raise its shutters.

“Hirose-san!”

“Hm...? Oh, Maou-chan, ‘morning. What do you ne...’”

Hirose’s sleepy eyes opened as wide as if he’d had a bucket of water thrown in his face at the sight of Maou pulling something alongside him.

“Hirose-san, you said when I bought my bike that you could put a luggage rack and stuff on, right?”

“Ye-yeah... are you, did you...”

“wafu!”

Maou picked up Alas Ramus, as if enjoying Hirose’s flabbergasted reaction. “Do you have a child seat that she would be able to sit in?”

Maou asked the dumbfounded Hirose seriously. He then proceeded to take nearly an hour looking at different types of seats before heading home.

“Well, I figured he’d react like that, so I was ready for it.”

In the apartment yard where the sun hadn’t risen high yet, Maou attached the child seat that had cost him five thousand yen to the front of Dullahan II.

“You shouldn’t have done that, my lord. What if this starts a rumor?”

“Don’t worry, I told him that I’m taking care of a relative’s child.”

Ashiya frowned, but Maou paid no attention.

“...My lord, may I ask you a question?”

“What?”

“I should have asked you sooner, but why did you decide to take in Alas Ramus, my lord?”

“You don’t like her?”

“No, that was not why I asked, but I just thought it wouldn’t have been a problem if Crestia took her in instead...”

“Well, I guess in the end, it’s you, Suzuno, and Chii-chan taking care of her. Sorry.”

“P-please, that’s not...”

“I just thought that if some problem does happen, I should take responsibility for it. That’s all. I don’t have any proof that anything will happen or any clue what it might be, though.”

Maou began gathering the vinyl wrapping scraps and the hexagonal wrench that came with the seat.

“There’s something I’m curious about,” said Maou as he tapped his own forehead and went back inside the apartment, leaving an unsatisfied-looking Ashiya outside.

“My lord... please, please be careful! She’s the hero! We don’t know what she might do!”

As Maou headed out, Ashiya pleaded with him desperately. One would think it should be the other way around.

“Well, if something happens, I’ll just run crying to the security officers, so don’t worry. No matter what happens, at the very least, I’ll protect Alas Ramus.”

Maou left Demon King Castle, not making Ashiya feel better in the slightest.

If Maou had been by himself, as he had been before, he most definitely would have preferred to walk to Shinjuku Station which was one station further from Sasazuka, then get off at the JR Suidoubashi Station, the train station next to Tokyo Big Egg Town, and save 120 yen on train fare.

However, Maou had a little child with him this time. It was safer to get on the train from the Keiourushin Line at Sasazuka Station, then switch to the metropolitan government-operated Shinjuku Line and change to the Nanboku Line at Ichigaya Station, and finally get off at another station close to the park, the Tokyo Metro Kourakuen Station.

They left early so that they wouldn't be yelled at for getting there late, but the sun was already high in the sky and showing no mercy in illuminating the entire city.

Inside the tote bag that Maou usually took to work were a cup, wet wipes, extra diapers, and even oral rehydration solution. All this preparation would have been for naught if he made the foolish, money-saving choice of not taking the train all the way and caused her to get heatstroke. Alas Ramus was happy and excited from the moment she hopped on her first train ride, but she also showed a somewhat scared side of her when the train went underground through a tunnel.

After being told how absolutely adorable Alas Ramus was by an elderly couple who boarded the train at the Keiourushin Line Shinjuku Station, they switched to the Nanboku Line at Ichigaya Station, which in turn was directly linked with the metropolitan government-run Shinjuku line, which Maou had

never done before. They then arrived at Kourakuen Station, and rode up the long escalator to ground level.

When Maou was about halfway up the escalator, a shadowy figure looked up at them worriedly.

“...No one suspicious... I, Ashiya, will protect your back as your shadow, my lord!”

It was Ashiya. No one other than Ashiya could be this inept at tailing someone. He wore a cheap pair of sunglasses as if they were a disguise, and was peeking out of the shadows with his back against a pillar, drawing the attention of everyone around him. Furthermore, he was already failing his mission by focusing solely on Maou and not his surroundings.

“You’re the one who’s acting most suspicious, Ashiya-san.”

Ashiya froze in place as he heard a lecturing voice behind him.

“Please take off those hundred-yen-store sunglasses.. They don’t suit you at all, and you stick out like a sore thumb.”

“Wa-wa-wa-wah! Sa-Sasaki-san!”

Is it really acceptable for an archdemon to be ambushed by a high school girl so easily?

“I was on the same train. I found out about this from Suzuno-san’s email... but anyway, won’t you be the one in trouble instead of Maou-san if something were to happen?”

“Wha-what do you mean...?”

“Ashiya-san, you don’t have a cell phone, right? How are you going to contact someone if something happens?”

“Uh, I-I was going to look for a pay phone...”

“...That’s what I thought... Since you don’t have a quick way to contact him, Maou-san must not know that you’re tailing him.”

“Um, well, yes, because if Emilia finds me, it would cause nothing but trouble...”

While his prediction was not without reason, she could not fathom why he was so completely underprepared to tail them.

“If something comes up, you can use my phone. Let’s go! We’re losing them!”

Spurred on by Chiho's firm words, Ashiya followed after her quickly, but he couldn't help but to ask her something.

"But um... Sasaki-san, why are you..."

Seeing Chiho's unpleasant expression as she turned around, Ashiya regretted his thoughtlessness immediately.

"I understand why this had to be done, but I'm still bothered by it!"

"...My apologies."

Chiho and Ashiya ran up the escalators in order to not lose sight of Maou.

They had arranged to meet Emi at the ticket gate near the Marunouchi Line of the Kourakuen Station.

Maou looked at the station map for a brief moment, then started heading up the stairs with Alas Ramus holding his hand. The ticket gate of Kourakuen's Nanboku Line platform was deep within the station, and while one might have thought Alas Ramus would get tired of walking, she was actually ahead of Maou, churning her short legs and arms without getting out of breath at all.

Chiho couldn't help smiling at such an adorable sight, but then,

“...!”

“Wha-what is it, Sasaki-san?”

When they reached the ground level, Chiho swallowed loudly.

She had seen a young woman standing in front of the ticket gate, impatiently looking at her thin, tight watch.

The woman who wore a hat with a wide, soft visor and a thick designer mule, and had her hair tied when she usually just let it hang, was none other than Emi.

Maou and Ashiya still hadn't recognized Emi, most likely because she looked so different from her usual self.

“Yusa-san... is surprisingly into this.”

She had even worn a large necklace to counterbalance her neck, which was completely exposed now that her hair was tied. Her outfit was so perfect and she looked like such a mature lady, that even Chiho's breath was taken away.

“Hm...? Is that actually Emilia? Humph. That outfit could not be more unsuited for battle. Has she forgotten her identity as a hero?”

Ashiya made a remark that completely missed the point after following Chiho’s line of sight and finally recognizing Emi.

“Ashiya-san, what’s Maou-san wearing today...?”

“His usual. There’s absolutely no reason to dress up for Emilia, and we don’t have the money to buy summer clothes anyway, since our budget’s gone up in flames ever since Urushihara joined us.”

Inside Chiho, the jealous thoughts of not wanting to see Maou dressed up with Emi the way she was dressed now collided with her simple worries of just how terrible fashion-wise it was for Maou to be dressed from head to toe in worn-out Unishiro clothes while Emi was so nicely dressed.

Alas Ramus seemed to have found Emi before Maou and starting pulling him towards her. Watching Maou’s back didn’t tell the others anything about how he reacted.

As expected, Emi smiled as she found Alas Ramus, but after seeing what Maou was wearing, her face became stern again.

Chiho and Ashiya watched the entire scene unfold from behind the shadows of a pillar, but then, “Fu-fu-fu-fu, what do you two think? Emi’s outfit coordination today is really something, isn’t it?”

Their shoulders were suddenly grabbed by someone. They froze in place and turned around slowly.

“Oh... you’re Yusa-san’s friend,”

“Su-Suzuki-san!?”

Rika Suzuki stood behind Chiho and Ashiya with a firm grip on their shoulders.

The women of this world were somehow very adept at sneaking up on demons.

“Wha-what are you doing here?”

Chiho looked at Rika, then towards down the road at Emi.

“No no, that’s my line. I was wondering what the two of you were up to together like this, and sure enough, Emi and Maou-san are standing in the

direction you two are looking in. As fellow friends, I thought I had to come talk to you guys.”

Ashiya suddenly realized something.

They were meeting up at this time because Emi had a morning shift. There shouldn't have been enough time after work for her to go back to Eifuku Town, so she must have gone to work at her company in that outfit.

“Yeaah, I was so shocked! I’ve never seen Emi look like that before. You probably can’t tell from all the way here, but she definitely stopped by the beauty salon yesterday,” said Rika as she put her hand on her chin with a tone that sounded like she was intentionally fishing for a reaction out of Chiho.

“Re-really!?”

“Hmm? Does it bother you?”

“I-I-I’m, um, not, can’t say that I’m not bothered, but, um...”

Chiho’s face turned beet-red, which was made even worse by the heat. Seeing that her reaction was far easier to read than she had expected, the first to give in was actually Rika.

“Hehe, sorry, sorry. Maybe I teased you too much. Chiho-chan, you have nothing to worry about. That’s just Emi being stubborn.”

“...Huh?”

“Emi and Maou-san don’t get along well at all, right? She’s doing that because she doesn’t want to be taken lightly. But,”

She adjusted her line of sight slightly to look at Maou.

“If you try too hard, it just backfires on you. This round goes to Maou-san, because he’s completely at ease.”

At that moment, Emi, Maou, and Alas Ramus began walking towards Tokyo Big Egg.

When Chiho turned to look, Alas Ramus was being walked hand in hand by her “Mommy” and “Daddy,” and she couldn’t stop her heart from giving a big jump.

“Well then,”

Rika grinned.

“What shall we do, you two?”

Tokyo Big Egg Town surrounded the Tokyo Big Egg, which was the stadium of the SE-League’s professional baseball team, the Titans.\*

**\*While this is less obvious in English, this is a spoof on an actual Japanese pro baseball team which plays in the Tokyo Dome, the Yomiuri Giants.**

It was the only large-scale amusement park in the city, and had attractions all the way from the shopping center next to Kourakuen Station, The Lagoon, to the area surrounding the Big Egg Hotel.

The entrance to the grounds was not governed by an entry gate. Rather, each attraction had its own price and the park was set up such that anyone passing by could easily go on any one of them.

The mall on the opposite side of The Lagoon and Kourakuen Station also had a shop that catered to people of all ages, which was another popular shopping spot.

Another of the park’s main attractions was the hero show that took place on every weekend and holidays.

Unlike the other rides, the show was not included in the one-day pass, but the stage on which the immensely popular special effect heroes gathered together drew multitudes of children every show.

In this amusement park filled with smiles and excitement, with expressions that looked like they had just missed the punchline of some joke, Maou and Emi walked as they were pulled along by Alas Ramus.

The fountain in the outside area on the second floor of The Lagoon played music at set times, displaying a synchronized dancing fountain show. Coincidentally, it happened right as the three of them walked past it, and countless jets began shooting up, making different shapes and disappearing.

“oooou...!”

Alas Ramus watched with her mouth agape and eyes sparkling.

“Hey.”

“What?”

As Maou watched Alas Ramus from behind her, he replied to Emi lazily as if the heat was already getting to him.

“The sun is pretty strong again today. You did put sunscreen on her, right?”

“Uuh, um... I read somewhere that it’s okay if it’s prescribed by a doctor, but...”

According to the research he had made Urushihara do, the prevailing opinion was that baby sunscreen was less likely to trigger skin problems if it was prescribed by a doctor rather than an ordinary version that could be bought at drug stores.

However, Maou's health insurance did not cover Alas Ramus. Having a checkup without insurance would have brought one problem after another to Demon King Castle from an ordinary Japanese social living standpoint, so he hadn't been able to make appropriate preparations for sun protection.

“Then you should have at least thought about buying a hat for her or something. The Lagoon has a clothing store inside, so we'll stop there first. If you say you're going to take her in yourself, you have to take responsibility and think about these things seriously,” Said Emi, with a harsh tone that left no room for rebuttal. Maou had no choice other than to reply meekly.

“Yeah, sorry... Hey, Alas Ramus, you having fun?”

“oooou.... ooooooh...!!”

“Still amazed by the fountains, huh.”

Meanwhile, Ashiya, Chiho, and Rika peered down from a terrace toward the outdoor second floor where Maou and the others were.

“Hmm, they actually do look and act like family. She’s really taken a liking to Emi, huh?”

“...So-so cute.”

Chiho couldn’t help but let out a sigh as she watched Alas Ramus become captivated by the fountain.

Ashiya, on the other hand, was dutifully paying careful attention to Maou’s surroundings and safety. However, he did not forget to make sure to keep an eye out on Maou’s spending in order to make sure he was not wasting money.

Meanwhile, the group of three never noticed the reactions of those tailing them, or the fact that they were being tailed to begin with. After watching the fountain show, they held hands and started walking towards a store in The Lagoon to buy a hat for Alas Ramus.

And the other group of three followed suit from some distance behind.

“Oh, there’s a Unislo.”

Maou took a look at the map of The Lagoon and found a familiar logo. However, “No. Why does it always have to be Unislo with you?” Emi bluntly rejected the idea.

“Because the clothes are cheap and easy to pick out...”

“Hey, you need to check out other stores, too. I don’t know what goes through your head, but they aren’t as expensive as you think.”

“Whaaat?”

“Don’t ‘whaaat’ me! What if Alas Ramus grows up to be a cheapskate like you?”

“What’s so bad about being economical?”

“...Let’s go, Alas Ramus. We don’t need him.”

“needim?”

Emi pulled them up the big, scary escalator, and they reached a floor with an apparel store that carried many brands, including Unislo.

“Hmm... the sizes around here are still too big.”

Emi took several children’s clothes, put them on Alas Ramus’s shoulders, and mumbled.

“But I’m sure she’ll grow fast, so as long as the bottom isn’t dragging on the ground, it’ll be okay if it’s a little big,” Emi said, then took a quick glance at Maou.

“...You don’t have anything to say? When I say ‘fast,’ I’m talking about a few months.”

“If you’re waiting for me to say something back to you, don’t hold your breath. I’m not going to talk to you if I can help it.”

“How long do you plan on taking care of her?”

Even while talking, Emi quickly took several clothes that might match Alas Ramus and put them up against her shoulders.

“...Who knows? Her real parents could show up today, or I could have to give her off to be married one day.”

“Married... I might bring this up a lot, but why don’t you seriously think about spending the rest of your life in Japan?”

“...Oh, how about this? It’ll even cover her shoulders from the sun!” Maou suggested, and lazily handed her a straw hat which surprisingly looked good on Alas Ramus.

“I probably shouldn’t be asking this, but aren’t you worried about your subordinates that you left behind?”

Maou’s answer to that question was short and simple.

“Oh, I’ve already given up on them.”

“...Huh?”

“It comes with either a pink or a yellow ribbon, huh. Alas Ramus, which one do you like?”

“mmm, malkoo!”

Alas Ramus pointed to the hat with a yellow ribbon.

As Emi had nothing to say to the cold answer that one might expect from the demon king, Maou shrugged tiredly.

“Come on. Don’t you understand what Emerada, Albert, Orba, and Suzuno showing up one after another means?”

Maou unintentionally glanced at the price tag of the straw hat that Alas Ramus had chose, and instinctively cringed.

“A year was a bit too long. The survivors of the demon army that invaded Ente Isla had to have been wiped out a long time ago. Otherwise, the most important fighting assets of humanity wouldn’t be taking field trips to an alternate world.”

The three great archdemons and Lucifer had been officially wiped out, and thus the chain of command for the demon king’s army had been completely broken. It was not a hard story to believe. However,

“I-I see. But, it’s a bit pathetic, just imploding without the leaders. I suppose that’s about what you’d expect from demons.”

Emi had no intention of sympathizing, and as usual, did not let an opportunity to slip an insult.

However,

“I can’t even argue against that. They really can’t do anything without me. But if I just go back without regaining enough power, I’d just get overthrown anyway. Either way,”

Maou, who seemed to have gathered his resolve, turned his back towards Emi and Alas Ramus and headed towards the register with the hat in his hand. “Even if I were to return now with all my powers, I probably wouldn’t be able to take over the world.”

“Tha-that’s true. If there aren’t any demons left, you can’t really call yourself the demon king.” “No demons left? What the hell are you talking about?”

Maou turned around with an expression that looked like he thought Emi was a complete idiot.

“When you humans go to war, does every single one of you march off to the battlefield?”

“What?”

Emi didn’t understand what he was saying for a moment, but Maou continued towards the register without waiting for a reply.

Since they were going to use the hat right away, Maou had the tag cut off and put the hat on Alas Ramus.

“mmfuu, am i cute?”

Alas Ramus looked at herself in the mirror, and looked up at Maou repeatedly.

“Yeah, you look really cute!”

She blew away the tense atmosphere that had been there just a second ago, and Maou’s face loosened almost to the point of embarrassment.

“Hey, let’s save buying her clothes for another time. Besides, it’s right around lunchtime. Won’t the lines for the rides be shorter around now? Hey, Alas Ramus, which one do you wanna ride?”

“zat, daddy! zat wan!”

Alas Ramus pointed at a freefall ride that could be seen from The Lagoon’s window.

“Hmm, she probably wouldn’t be able to ride that because of her age and height. Well, let’s just walk and take a look around.”

Emi had an expression like she had just been fooled by something, and followed after the two with an unsatisfied expression.

And the group of three that was following them looked at the store, then back at Maou and the others.

“Why did they look so solemn just buying a hat?”

“I don’t know… maybe the hat was expensive?”

After hearing Rika and Chiho’s conversation, Ashiya nonchalantly picked up a hat that was the same kind as the one Maou had just bought for Alas Ramus.

“Two… thousand… five… hundred… yen.”

He moaned as if he were suffocating.

“Th-the savings from the free ticket were blown in an instant…”

“Huh? Ashiya-san, you don’t look well. Do you need something to drink?”

“Ha-hahaha, no, p-please, I’m fine. Lets go, hahahaha.”

Ashiya put the hat back while giving a strained smile, and began walking after the urging Rika. Chiho picked up the hat with a label that said “The new hat of this summer!” She looked at the price tag, quietly wiped away a tear, and also put the hat back.

“Hm, but this suuure is boring. They’re surprisingly calm about this. I was gonna step in if they got in a fight or something, but I guess kids really does bring two people together.”

“Huh? Suzuki-san, you mean you didn’t come here because you were just being nosy!?”

Chiho couldn’t help asking honestly.

“Come on, Chiho-chaaan, who do you think your big sis is? Hmm?”

Rika smiled and played with Chiho’s cheeks.

“Ahm Sooey...”

“You’re not completely wrong, but it’s my time off and I’m bored. I came to keep an eye on her for aftercare.”

“Hafhaahea?”

“Yep. That girl is Maou-san’s relative, right? If a little child like that suddenly left, it’d leave a huge hole in Emi’s heart, you know? When that happens, it wouldn’t be a bad idea for someone who knows what’s going on to take her out for a drink or something, don’t you think?”

“Ouf... Ye-yes, you’re right.”

Her cheeks finally freed, Chiho sandwiched her face between her hands.  
“Aaand, I still wanna know what Emi looks like on a day out with another guy, too.”

“S-so you’re just being nosy after all! You pinched me for nothing!”

“You’re wrong, Chiho-chan. This isn’t being nosy, it’s stalking.”

“That’s even worse!”

“You say that, but what about you, Chiho-chan? You’re not Maou-san’s relative or anything, so why are you following him around? Hmm?”

“I-I-I, um,”

“Come on, I won’t tell anyone else, so tell your big sis everything.”

“...I’m delighted that you two are having so much fun.” Ashiya said wearily behind the two girls fooling around.

“Come on, don’t say that!”

“Wha!”

Ashiya let out a small cry as he was pulled by his shoulder.

“Well, I get that you’re bitter towards Emi because she’s the reason your company went under, Ashiya-san. But it’s not like she’s a rival to you right now, right? You guys aren’t going to be eaten alive or anything, so do you really need to be so serious about this?”

She was their rival through and through, and it wouldn’t be a surprise if they were cut down by her, let alone being eaten alive. But it went without saying that Ashiya couldn’t tell Rika that.. “I recommend you read some Soseki Natsume, Ashiya-san.”

“Wh-why all of a sudden!?”

“Hmm, I think his words would really speak to someone who’s always living with a stick in there like you.”

After having fun watching Ashiya’s baffled expression, Rika let go of him.

Chiho and Ashiya had been constantly led around by the nose from the moment they ran into Rika, the aggressive Kaisai office lady who did not hesitate to jump on people’s weak spots.

“Well,”

Rika began mumbling quietly enough so that Ashiya and Chiho, who just looked at each other with confused expressions, could not hear her.

“I like that more than some idiot who doesn’t live for anything.”

Alas Ramus was overjoyed, with various colored balloons tied to her hand.

She seemed to really like bright, colorful things, and got Maou to buy her balloons many times along the way.

“Geez... I feel like I’m witnessing the birth of a useless father who can’t say no to his daughter.” Emi muttered, as she fanned herself with a fan that was being given out at The Lagoon and drank mineral water to quench her thirst.

As Emi watched Alas Ramus ride on a small merry-go-round while cheering happily with Maou, who didn’t look that unhappy himself, she felt as if she wanted to just throw everything away and return to Ente Isla.

The words that Maou had spoke earlier had gotten stuck in Emi’s head.

It was not just an annoyance.

That the demons had been exterminated by human forces should not bring her any emotions other than happiness.

Maou hid his true feelings at the most important moments, so it was hard to tell what he was really thinking, but on the surface, he showed no emotions of sadness or rage as he predicted that his subordinates had been annihilated.

However, Maou's one sentence seemed to contradict something that she had always thought was obvious and took for granted, and she couldn't help but feel alarmed.

As if her assumption about something that she believed to be as obvious as breathing or drinking water...

“...ey... Hey, Emi!”

“...Huh? Oh, sorry, what?”

As she sat thinking, Maou had suddenly gotten off of the merry-go-round and stood next to her.

“What's wrong with you, spacing out like that? Is the heat getting to you?”

“N-n-no way! D-don't sneak up on me like that! Anyway, what do you want!?”

“Alas Ramus wants to see this thing.”

Maou pointed to the advertisement poster on the information board for the hero show, the famous attraction of Tokyo Big Egg Town.

Emi remembered seeing a commercial about it the other day, but there was something else she was curious about.

“...Did you buy a TV?”

The show’s main draw was the special effects battle force wearing five different colors and the colorful magical girls. It was pretty popular thanks to the bright, sunny Sunday, but the problem was that it was always about the Sunday morning children’s TV show.

“Forget TV, my antennas are still analog.”

Maou replied with a predictable answer.

“But I think Alas Ramus likes this kind of super-colorful stuff. I don’t know if there’s a reason for it, though.”

Alas Ramus was nailed in place at the somewhat surreal poster right outside the theater that showed a tag team between the hero forces and magical girls.

“I don’t mind seeing it, but there’s a entrance fee. Are you sure?”

“...I’ll just apologize to Ashiya later. I already bought the hat, anyway,” concluded Maou after hesitating for a long time. Emi briefly wondered why the breadwinner of the household didn’t have authority over the househusband.

“...Fine. I’ll pay for Alas Ramus. But you have to figure out a way to pay for yourself.”

“Thanks so much!!!”

The demon king does not bow his head to the hero lightly.

However, from Emi’s point of view, she now had the demon king indebted to her, and of his own free will at that. This should even her debt to Ashiya for what he had to go through in the incident with Suzuno. Emi also briefly thought about paying for Maou as well just to make sure she was debt-free, but decided she felt it was even enough already.

Emi went to the ticket booth right next to them, but the employee seemed to give an apologetic look and lowered his head.

“The next show is already sold out. The next showing’s not for another two hours,” said Emi, turning to Maou.

“Seriously? Then should we buy the tickets now and go eat somewhere?”

“Sure. Okay, can I have tickets for two adults and one child, please?”

Emi bought tickets for all three of them.

“Here, one adult ticket for 1,500 yen.”

“Alrighty then.”

Maou took out the money from his wallet and gave it to Emi, taking his ticket from her. He then picked up Alas Ramus, took a look at the map of the park, and started heading towards a nearby restaurant.

“Hmm, they’re getting along surprisingly well.”

“...”

“...”

While the entire situation was entertaining enough for her already, Rika added her commentary to get more fun reactions out of Ashiya and Chiho.

“But the hero show, huh. I wish I could’ve seen it when I was a kid. What do you guys want to do? Wanna go in, too?”

“This is too much...”

“I don’t think we should...”

“Huh? Why?”

Confused, Rika tilted her head at the indecisive Chiho and Ashiya.

“Be-because that show is for little children, right? It’d be strange for a group like us to watch something like that...”

“Chiho-chan, you’re so out of date. The entire new generation’s attitude is out of date.”

“What!?”

“Nowadays, a surprising amount of adults watch stuff like this in private. A long time ago, some older ladies got into special effects hero shows because they liked the hunk actors before they transformed and put on their masks, but on stages like this, they’ve already pre-recorded the voices of those actors. Stuff like that really draws them in.”

“Whaaat?”

“And this anime over here...”

“I used to watch it when I was little, but there are too many of them out there for me to keep track of them now... PrePure, right?”

Somewhat similar to the hero forces, the anime series “Magical Girl Pretty Pure” depicted cute, colourfully dressed fighting girls. The iconic, girloriented anime was so popular that it received a film adaptation every year.

“There’s always a steady demand for anime, and the voice actors have been getting some major popularity recently, right? I read in a magazine that there’s a cult following of grown men who like stuff like this.”

“Hmm... so things like this appeal to all genders and generations.”

“Um, well, that’s not what I’m worried about, but...”

Chiho was fascinated by something completely off-topic, and Ashiya interjected timidly.

As there was an entry fee, there was obviously no way to peek in from outside, but voices that clearly did not belong to children could be heard from inside.

Rika gave a strained smile as she saw Chiho’s expression become stiff at the sound.

“Well then, we’ll go eat, too.”

Rika pointed to the open cafe-style Italian restaurant directly across from the stage entrance.

Two hours later, Maou and the others sat down in the seats that had been assigned to them near the front of the theater the hero show would take place in..

“These are pretty good seats. I’m surprised there are assigned seats for a simple theater like this, though.”

Maou leaned back in the long bench and took a look around.

“If this was free seating, some kids might not be able to see the stage.”

“Huh? Why?”

“There are all kinds of people in the world.”

The assigned “seats” were not like those in movie theaters that were divided by arm rests, so people would be shoulder-to-shoulder with whoever sat next to them.

Alas Ramus and their belongings separated them, but Emi found it difficult to be sitting so close to Maou.

Even if they were in the middle of a huge crowd of people, she would never be able to stand being having to be next to Maou.

This showing also seemed to be full, and with the sunlight beating directly down on them, the temperature was about two or three degrees higher than outside. In that atmosphere, a loud theme song suddenly started blaring, and smoke and fireworks blew from the stage. The special effects heroes were apparently up first in the show, but Alas Ramus could not help but jump at the sudden loud sound.

The special forces hero program had a theme song, and combining mecha and ultimate moves were usually shown in parallel to the song. However, the special forces heroes were in a ninja theme.

From the large tree object in the middle of the stage that was about the height of a two-story building, the five heroes struck their poses one by one and jumped down.

“Huh. They jump down from pretty high!”

“...What are you getting so amazed for? Aren’t you the demon king?”

“But why would ninjas wear such colorful outfits?”

“Why are you nitpicking about a children’s show?”

The action sequences had sprinkles of ninja-like characteristics, but the fluorescent-colored ninjas couldn’t stand out more if they tried.

The tree in the center was apparently going to be used by PrePure segment later as well, where it would gather “natural energy” to aid in the fighting.

“Huh! They’ve got some good moves! I wonder if they can actually fight in the military.”

The enemy standing before the ninja forces that they would have to fight were, for some reason, aliens.

When the space monster that seemed like the boss character appeared, a great cheer came from the crowd of children in the theater. “Oh, go get’em, bad guy! You’re pretty popular!”

“Hey, that’s not what’s popular. That getting defeated is what’s popular.”

“You’re the one who should stop nickpicking. Hey, Alas Ramus, which do you li...”

Maou noticed something strange as he tried to pull Alas Ramus into the conversation.

Alas Ramus normally liked vibrant, colorful things, but she was just blanking out, gazing vacantly at the stage.

“Hey, Alas Ramus?”

Hearing Maou’s voice, Emi also realized that something was amiss.

“What’s wrong?”

“Um, she’s spaced out... what’s wrong, Alas Ramus? Do you feel bad?”

“se... ott.”

“Huh?”

“We fell...”

“What? What’s wrong?”

There were surrounded by noise, so even if they realized Alas Ramus was saying something, they couldn’t hear what she was saying.

“daddy, that sefiott.”

“What is it? What’s wrong?”

“we all fell from da tree. mommy took me and ran away. markoo is gone.”

“Tree? Markoo? What are you...wha!” Maou panicked.

He didn’t know what had triggered it, but a crescent-shaped mark suddenly appeared on Alas Ramus’s forehead.

The mark somehow seemed like a crystal,, and began glowing in the same color as Alas Ramus's pupils and hair.

“...What... is that?”

Maou had Alas Ramus pull her hat all the way down to her eyes, but Emi saw the mark.

“...So you didn't notice it before? The same mark showed up when she first arrived at the apartment. It disappeared right away, though. Hey, Alas Ramus, come on!”

“Hey, don't shake her like that. For now, let's get out of here! Um, excuse us! This child isn't feeling well...”

Not bothering to wait for Maou's reply, Emi picked up Alas Ramus and fought through the excited crowd to get out of the theater.

She briefly considered calling for an employee, but decided against it as they wouldn't be able to explain the phenomenon on Alas Ramus's forehead.

Emi turned back and saw that Maou had taken their belongings and followed them out. She held Alas Ramus, who was still staring into blank space and mumbling, and looked for a cool, secluded place.

Emi placed her hand on the baby's forehead, but there was no fever or profuse sweating. It didn't seem like heat stroke, but she had no idea what the crescent moon-shaped symbol on her forehead that was the cause of everything meant.

Heading for air conditioning, she went inside The Lagoon and fortunately found an empty bench.

Taking a seat,

“Demon King, go get something for her to drink!” Emi yelled at Maou, who had finally caught up to them.

“H—how about this?”

Maou took out an oral rehydration solution.

“Give me that!”

Emi snatched it from Maou, and held it to Alas Ramus's mouth.

“And go get something that’s cold! Not for drinking, but we’ll put it against her neck and other places to cool her down!”

“G—got it!”

Even though he was jittery, Maou promptly obeyed every command that Emi gave. After he had left to go find a vending machine...

“Is she okay?”

Someone came up and asked Emi, who was holding Alas Ramus.

Emi looked up and saw a beautiful lady standing in front of her in a long, white dress and a white, wide-visored hat.

The lady looked down at Emi and Alas Ramus with eyes of such incredible colors that it felt like they just might suck them in.

“Um, yes, she’ll be fine. I don’t think she’s having a heat stroke, she just didn’t feel well...”

“...mommy?”

Suddenly, Alas Ramus snapped out of dazed, non-response state, and asked for Emi as if she had realized something.

Emi smiled and looked into Alas Ramus's face.

"I'm right here. Are you okay?"

"yesh..."

Her face didn't look any different, but her voice was weak, as if she had a fever. Emi pretended to wipe Alas Ramus's forehead in order to hide her crest. But then,

"Excuse me."

Suddenly, the lady dressed in white leaned in and placed her hand on Alas Ramus's head.

"Wh—what are you doing?"

"Don't say anything. This will be over in a moment."

Her tone was not imposing by any means, but Emi stayed silent as she had been told. On the ring finger of the woman's left hand was a ring with a small gem.

The ring seemed to glow violet for a moment, perhaps because of the strong sunlight. And then,

“...ou...ou!?”

Alas Ramus suddenly leaped up.

“hm? ou? wha? daddy?”

Alas Ramus acted as if she had just woken up from a nightmare, and looked around quickly. However, what shocked Emi the most was that as the hat fell as Alas Ramus leaped up, she saw that the crescent mark on her forehead had completely disappeared.

“o, momm-wah!”

Emi acted quickly to cover Alas Ramus with her body, and glared up towards the white lady who had stood up calmly.

“You don't have to be cautious with me. I'm not your enemy.”

The white lady calmly dusted her skirt cuff and gave a small smile.

“And I’m not the enemy of that little girl, either... Alas Ramus, you’ve gotten so big.”

“!!”

Emi had not called Alas Ramus by her name even once in front of the lady.

“How do you know her name...?” asked Emi, and the lady smiled gracefully.

“Of course I know it. It’s an important name.”

As Emi looked at the lady’s face, her heart suddenly started racing.

The conversation she had had with Emerada three days ago began playing through her head.

The way she talked as if she knew who Alas Ramus was.

Could this lady be...?

Emi suddenly felt hot, and not because of the temperature outside, but she saw that the lady's expression had suddenly turned solemn.

"Be careful. Because of what happened just now, they must have sensed the existence of the Yesod fragment on her forehead. This little girl's enemies will be here soon. Gabriel and his angelic subordinates are already on the move."

"Yesod... fragment? Gabriel...? Wait, are you...?"

"Heey, Emi! I got them!"

Emi thought she was onto something and was about to ask the lady, but at that precise moment, Maou ran up to her, yelling and carrying bottles and canned drinks in his arms.

And in that moment that Emi was distracted,

"mommy..."

"!!"

The white lady had disappeared.

As if it had all been a daydream, the lady had simply vanished.

“Lucky I found a vending machine so close. Here... huh? Alas Ramus, you’re okay now?”

“daddy, wehcome back!”

“Oh, ye-yeah. What? It was all for nothing? But I’m glad you’re okay. But what happened to you?”

“whachu meen?”

“Um... well, uh, oh well. Hey Emi, what’s gotten in-gah!”

“Why can’t you read the atmosphere around you!? You!!”

“Wh-what!? What the hell did I do!? Wh-why are you punching me all of a...”

“mommy, you scaawie!!!”

“Oh! There they are! Suzuki-san, over there!”

“Oho! Good job, Chiho-chan! This must be the power of love!”

“P-please, don’t say that!”

“Sheesh... Ashiya-san, I can’t believe you wrecked your stomach with just some olive oil. You’re in surprisingly poor health. We wasted a lot of time looking for them because we had to wait for you to use the bathroom.”

“M-my apologies...”

Because of Ashiya’s stomach reacting instantaneously to the Italian restaurant’s olive oil, Chiho and the others had lost track of Maou, Emi, and Alas Ramus.

They didn’t see them coming out of the hero show stage, so they had to walk around looking for them, and Chiho had eventually found Emi holding Alas Ramus and dragging Maou forcibly. Emi seemed to be headed towards the Great Ferris Wheel: Big Zero.\*\*

**\*\*Great Ferris Wheel: Big Zero is a spoof on Great Ferris Wheel: Big O, an actual ferris wheel in Tokyo Dome City. A rollercoaster runs through the empty center of the ferris wheel.**

“Are they going on the ferris wheel? It looks like Emi is forcing them, but...”

“It seems like it’d be way too hot to go on a ferris wheel right now, doesn’t it?”

“I heard that that ferris wheel has air conditioning in every gondola. As long as you have sun protection, it’s pretty cool.”

“Ho-how wasteful!”

The one to object to something being fully equipped with air conditioning was none other than Ashiya.

“But hmm. What’s Emi up to, forcing Maou-san into a floating, confined room...?”

“Suzuki-san!!”

“Chiho-chan, relax. I’m joking.”

Rika was obviously doing everything intentionally, which made it that much worse.

“Well, we should follow them anyway. I don’t think anything will happen, though. Ashiya-san, you okay?”

“Yes, somehow...”

The pale-faced Ashiya raised his hand and muttered.

Since he had been eating cheap, simple budget food all the time, and because it was the middle of the summer, eating heavy Italian food was like a death sentence to Ashiya's stomach, which had weakened by the summer.

“Well, I don't know why you came to follow them today, but nothing seems to be happening, right?”

Chiho and Ashiya looked at each other with difficult expressions as they heard Rika's unaware, happy-go-lucky words.

“Hello! Welcome to the Great Ferris Wheel: Big... Ze...ro.”

The employee in charge of checking tickets at the entrance gulped as a young couple shrouded in a dangerous atmosphere with a little child walked up.

The dangerous atmosphere could be described more precisely as the husband cowering to the wife's rage. The child, who looked to be about two years old, seemed to be unable to decide whose side to take.

“For three!”

The wife ordered passes for the three of them as if she were throwing a punch, and the employee violently nodded and let them through.

“Hellooo! Take your pictures right over heeere! The photo can be bought as a souvenir at that booth right over there!! Please make your purchases after the ride! Thank you!”

There was an employee with a large, single-lens reflex digital camera in front of the gondola who took pictures to be bought as park souvenirs.

“...We don’t need one, thank you...”

“Oh, if you don’t want it, it’ll be deleted right away! Please stand right over there! Oh, there! Can the dad please be in the middle with your child? There! Great! Can you move the little cutie’s balloons?”

The photo shoot was unnecessarily high-energy and forced.

“daddy, wha’s zat?”

Alas Ramus pointed towards the camera that the employee was holding and asked curiously. “Hm? That’s called a camera, and it’s going to take your photo, Alas Ramus.”

“fo-toh?”

If the word didn’t exist in Ente Isla, she wouldn’t understand what it was even if she understood Japanese.

“Um, let’s see. It’s a picture. It’ll paint a picture magically for you. Look at that big, round thing that the nice lady is holding, okay?”

“ooooh!”

Whether she understood everything or not was unclear, but Alas Rams began fixating at the camera lens with all her curiosity nonetheless.

“Hey, mooom! Can you look this way pleeeease?”

“...”

Emi had been looking to the side with an irritated expression, but there was no point acting immaturely to a complete stranger, so she reluctantly turned her gaze as if she ertr apologizing.

“Okaaay! I’m taking the picture noow! One, two, cheeeese!! …Good! The picture turned out great! If you would like a copy, please purchase one on the way off! Thank yooou!”

The three of them finally got on the gondola after being sent off in an awkwardly enthusiastic manner.

“Oh, it feels nice and cool in here.”

Maou had expected a sauna, but a cool, air-conditioned wind blew from behind the seats, and there was background music as well. The seats were hard, but the experience was far more enjoyable than he had expected.

“Please watch the balloons. One rotation takes about fifteen minutes, and please do not eat or smoke in the gondola. Now off you goo!” an employee said quickly as the door was closed.

“Oh, they’re already on!”

Emi and the others didn’t notice them, but right at that moment, Chiho, Rika, and Ashiya showed up at the ferris wheel ticket booth.

“They’ll get away from us! Hurry!”

Spurred on by Rika, Ashiya and Chiho hurriedly placed money in the ticket machine. However,

“Um, excuse me,”

“Yes?”

Chiho suddenly heard a voice from next to her.

An elderly lady and her grandchild were standing next to Chiho, looking to be at a loss in front of the machine.

“Um, how do I use this?”

“Oh, yes, you put your money in here... you see, this is a touch panel.”

Chiho knew that there were many elderly people did not understand the concept of a touch panel and would just not know what to do.

The location where money was to be inserted was not near the panel, and there were no explanations on the screen, which only showed buttons with prices. The ticketing machine was not terribly user-friendly.

“The ferris wheel is free for kids, so you choose this price and quantity here...”

Chiho carefully explained the process to the elderly lady to assist her in buying the tickets. And finally, the lady and the grandchild were able to get their tickets, safe and sound.

The elderly lady thanked Chiho over and over again as she headed to the ferris wheel.

“Oh! Oh no!”

Since she had been very attentively teaching them, Chiho thought that she had made Rika and Ashiya wait.

“...Huh?”

The gondola entrance point and the ferris wheel ticket booth were not that large. However, Ashiya and Rika were nowhere to be found.

“What? Whaat?”

Dazed, Chiho looked up at the gondolas and made eye contact with Rika, who had her face against the window with a frozen expression. “Whaaaat?”

“Well then, explain yourself.”

In the confined space of the gondola, Maou had nowhere to hide from Emi’s imposing glare. The glare that came from between Alas Ramus’s balloons was especially terrifying.

“I thought it was suspicious from the beginning. Why did you decide to take her in in the first place? Weren’t you the one who was always trying to avoid trouble?”

“Um, uuuuh...”

“And that crescent mark on her forehead, you know something about it, don’t you? Spill everything out!”

“mommyy, whas’zat big thing’?”

“Hm...? That’s the Tokyo Skytree.”

“Because of that thing, just buying a TV is pointless because you still can’t watch anything.”

“Stop trying to change the subject!”

The gondola that the three of them were in shook slightly at the heavy impact.

Meanwhile, Rika and Ashiya sat two gondolas behind them.

“Ugh... if only we were one gondola over, we might have been able to see what’s happening...”

Although they were able to get in, the gondolas were not transparent and there was no way for them to see inside a gondola two positions away.

“...”

On the other hand, Rika sat on the other side of Ashiya, staying quiet and staring at her feet.

Chiho seemed to have been held back by something, and Rika was now by herself with Ashiya.

“Suzuki-san, is something the matter?”

“Hyah! Huh!?”

Rika had been so energetic until just moments ago, but she was now closed up like a clam. Even someone other than Ashiya would have been able to notice such a drastic change.

“Um, uh, um, I was, I was feeling bad that we left Chiho-chan behind...”

“I see. We were in a hurry...”

Ashiya agreed to Rika’s unnaturally flustered answer without further questions, sighed, and leaned back in the chair.

“...!!”

The ferris wheel’s gondolas were not large by any means. If the tall Ashiya sat back, there would be no avoiding contact at the knees or the feet.

Rika’s confidence until now had been supported by the presence of another person, Chiho. If there was someone else there, physical contact or being in a confined space would not bother her at all, but being in a locked gondola with a man was not a situation she had been in before.

Furthermore, that man was Ashiya.

When they had met about a week ago in a commotion that had involved Emi and Suzuno, she had thought that he was just a somewhat eccentric person, but spending the past several hours together had caused that impression to grow stronger.

“Are you alright? Your face is red. Have you been in the sun for too long?”

“To-too close!”

“Pardon?”

“Uh-uh-um, nothing, it’s nothing! My sunscreen didn’t work well probably, that’s all. Yeah!”

Pulling herself back as far as possible, Rika waved both her hands quickly. Ashiya did not become suspicious at all, and began looking at the scenery outside.

The staff had said one rotation took approximately fifteen minutes, but Rika was so embarrassed that she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to make it until then.

Around that time, Chiho was sitting on a bench near the gondola entry point, downing a bottle of

“Hey! Tea!”

**\*\*that she had bought from a vending machine**

\*\*”Hey! Tea!” (Oi! Ocha!) is a spoof on a tea brand, “Heeeeey, Tea.” (Oooi, ocha.)

“So, are you going to talk!? Or are you not!? Are you choosing to die right here!?”

“There aren’t enough choices! And don’t just spit out words that aren’t good for a little girl to learn!”

Two gondolas ahead of them, the interrogation continued.

“I said, why does it matter!? It’s not like I didn’t do anything wrong, but I’m just okay with being

Alas Ramus’s dad!”

“Even if it’s okay with you, it’s not okay with me! Didn’t you see that white lady who was standing in front of me!? Something is going to happen again! She said something about angelic soldiers! If you don’t want to make me your enemy, spit out everything you know!”

“See what!? And are you saying if I talk, you’ll be on my side!?”

“Not on your side! On this little girl’s side!”

Emi gestured at Alas Ramus with her eyes. The little girl had been staring out the window the entire time.

While the two of them looked at Alas Ramus's back, the gondola had nearly reached the top of the rotation.

“...someone gave it to me a long time ago.”

Maou seemed to have given up, and gave a sigh while making a difficult expression.

“Forget being a demon king, this was back when I was just a little brat that looked like a goblin with some hair.”

Seeing that Maou was finally ready to talk, Emi backed down and began listening.

“Before you were even born, the demon world was a pitiful place. If demons from two different races just saw each other, they'd start fighting to the death... it was that kind of a world. My clan was so weak that it could have been blown away by a stiff breeze, and we were wiped out by one demon that couldn't use any spells and had muscles for brains. My first and last memory of my parents is them lying dead on the ground.”

The life story began unfolding suddenly. This was far worse for Alas Ramus's upbringing, but Emi let Maou continue talking uninterrupted.

“We lost in a battle against another clan and my clan was massacred, and I was tossed aside like trash just waiting to die. But there was someone who saved a small filthy demon brat on a whim.” Maou looked to the distance, and said nostalgically.

“That was the first time I met an angel, with the whitest wings I’ve ever seen.”

“daddyyy, whas’zat?”

“Hmm? Oh! Alas Ramus! I’m impressed that you saw that! That’s called a blimp!”

“bwimp?”

Alas Ramus stared at the blimp in the sky with her mouth wide open.

“Where did I stop?”

“You said you were rescued by an angel when you were about to die...”

“Oh, right right. Well, I was a goblin-level idiot, so I tried to fight back even when I was wounded. When I think about it now, it must have been a really high-ranked angel. I couldn’t even lay a finger on it. But it’s not like it was trying to kill me, though. Since I’m a demon, I would have eventually healed on my own anyway, but it kept coming back to see how I was doing, and kept telling me stories that I didn’t care for. I listened because I couldn’t move anyway. But because of that, I learned a lot of things I’d never heard of before.”

Emi was extremely surprised.

Since he was called Demon King Satan, she had always assumed that he had been born into a high-ranking demon family line (assuming demon family lines actually existed) and that his way to kingship had been paved for him.

“Well, my wounds were pretty bad, so it took a while before I could move around again. But it finally got through to my head that the angel wasn’t trying to kill me. Since it kept telling me things I didn’t know, I also learned all sorts of things. But as I kept listening, I began to understand how strange it was for an angel to save a demon. So one day, I asked why it had saved me.

“...And?”

“...Don’t you dare laugh. If you do, I’m not finishing the story.”

For some reason, Maou broke eye contact as if he were embarrassed.

“...It said it was because I was crying.”

“Huh?”

“It said it was the first time it’d seen a demon crying, so it couldn’t leave me alone.”

Emi couldn’t imagine why a demon would cry, but she realized that she knew next to nothing about how demons lived and functioned.

“So why were you crying?”

Maou frowned at Emi’s question, but seeing that she wasn’t ridiculing him, he replied honestly with a bitter expression.

“Well, a lot of reasons. I said the same thing earlier, but it’s not because I was sad about my family or someone I cared for dying. To put it bluntly, I think they were things like how easily and meaninglessly I was going to die, and how frustrating that was.”

Perhaps because Maou was speaking of bitter memories from his past, he broke his eye contact with Emi.

“Anyway, even after that, it kept coming to talk to me and I heard a lot of stories. That was also when I first learned about the human world.”

“!!”

Maou said it without blinking an eye, but to Emi, it was a significant revelation.

The reason the demon king had invaded Ente Isla could be traced back to an angel?

Of course, there was no proof that the story Maou was telling was true. However, if it was, the universe might be turned upside down.

“And she... that is, the crystal that she originated from, was left by that angel on the day it disappeared. It was a beautiful, violet, crescent-shaped crystal.”

“stopeet, im wanta seee!”

Alas Ramus protested as she was suddenly picked up by Maou.

There was nothing on her forehead, but had that crescent shaped mark been the manifestation of that crystal?

“If you want to learn more about the world, plant this seed and nurture it. Do your best, Great Demon King Satan.”

“What?”

“...Thatt was a note that it left behind. ‘Writing’ was one of the most precious skills I gained from it; a method of communication other than screaming and violence. I’ll keep it brief and skip over the glorious part where I grew up and spent two hundred years turning the world of carnage into a legitimate demon society, but without the knowledge that I received then, none of that would have been possible. That’s why I planted the crescent seed. I thought it would be to my benefit somehow, even though I had no idea what it was. Well, I was told to plant it, but I was pretty shocked when a plant actually started growing out of a crystal like that.”

Maou seemed to be gazing into the not-too-distant past. The actual Demon King Castle that was built where the commerce city of the central continent, Isla Centrum, once stood. The symbol of the demon world’s revolution.

Seeing a world other than the demon world, Demon King Satan planted the violet, crescentshaped crystal in hopes of it sprouting, in a pot that faced

toward the skies behind the demon king's throne room, where no one else was allowed to enter.

"I didn't become the demon king by being born into it. The name Satan was so common that if a Cerberus walked around, it would eventually run into one. The name Satan came from the legendary demon king who existed even before the heavenly legends, although I don't know how a legend like that managed to survive in such a shitty demon world. I don't know why she called me the great demon king, but you could say everything started from back then, and with this thing."

Maou patted Alas Ramus's head, but she wanted to look outside, so she ran away from his hand and became glued to the gondola windows again. "Well, that's more or less my reason. I guess in a way, because I planted that violet crystal that eventually became Alas Ramus, I really am like a father to her."

"Then, that angel is Alas Ramus's real..."

"Logically, I guess you could say that. But when I got it from that angel, it was just a violet crystal.

I don't know if she had a consciousness then."

As Emi listened to Maou, a combination of excitement and a foreboding feeling in her chest caused her to break out in a cold sweat. She asked,

"Who was that angel?"

Lailah, who had disappeared from where Emerada was. The white lady who knew Alas Ramus's identity. The angel who gave the crystal that eventually became Alas Ramus to the young demon who eventually became the demon king. And Alas Ramus, who was born from that crystal, thought she was her "Mommy."

Could it be?

A storm of excited anticipation and ill omen brewed in Emi's heart.

As if Maou had sensed the turbulence in Emi's heart, he paused for a second and said,

"No one you'd know."

The storm within her heart dispersed before it could build up to full strength.

"...You're not trying to hide it from me, are you?"

"No, I'm not, but it wasn't a famous angel that you can find in the Bible either. But anyway, how did Alas Ramus turn back to normal? You know something, don't you?"

No matter how she looked at it, Maou was hiding something. But since Emi would gain nothing by learning more about his past, she answered honestly.

“A lady dressed in white healed her, just by placing her hand on her.”

“...What the hell? Was she part of some kind of religion?”

Maou seemed to not have seen the lady. Emi started to get riled up.

“No, she wasn’t! You really didn’t see her when you got back!? After her ring started glowing,

Alas Ramus was back to normal, as if she was just waking up from a dream!”

“I said, I didn’t see it! And what was the ring like?”

“It was a plain ring. I think there was a violet gem on it, though...”

“...So it wasn’t plain at all.”

Maou’s head began hurting due to Emi’s occasional mental lapses.

“What else was there?”

“I didn’t have enough time to look because of some idiot who couldn’t read the mood and ran back screaming.”

“Hey.”

“And then she said something about Gabriel and his angel subordinate soldiers, and Yesod? A fragment of whatever that wa-ow!”

Maou couldn’t stop himself from delivering a massive chop to Emi through her hat..

“W-what do you think you’re doing!? I’ll cut you down!”

Emi retaliated violently, but Maou didn’t stay silent either.

“Are you really an ex-knight of the church!? Kids these days! Do some studying about the world every once in a while!”

Maou had suddenly raised his voice, then hung his head, and slouched.

“Yesod... Yesod!? So that’s what that was! Damn it! What the hell was that angel thinking, shoving something like that onto me! So what happened just now was...!”

“Wh-what? What’s gotten into you?”

“When we get back, Suzuno is going to laugh at how hopelessly stupid you are.”

“What!?”

“Look, Yesod is—”

“whaaat, daddy?”

Alas Ramus suddenly focused her attention on Maou in response his utterance of the word “Yesod.”.

“Huh?”

Emi tilted her head, as she had no idea why Alas Ramus had responded the way she had, but Maou questioned her with an expression that seemed to be a combination of conviction and despair.

“Hey, Alas Ramus,”

“what, daddy?”

“What’s this?”

Maou pointed to the red balloon. Alas Ramus responded without hesitation.

“ge’ura.”

“This?”

He then pointed to the one with a deep yellow color that resembled a Japanese kerria flower.

“tiferez.”

“What about this bright yellow one?”

“malkoo. mah fwend.”

“And this white one.”

“keteeh!”

“Wh-what is she saying...?”

Emi's eyes darted at the unending barrage of words she had never heard of before.

“Then this?”

Asked Maou, as he took another balloon. Its color was violet.

“yesod. da’s me.”

“...I see. You’re so smart, you were able to pronounce it right!”

“smaat? eheheee.”

The gondola was finally nearing the end of the rotation. Emi squinted instinctively at the sun shining down on Tokyo Big Egg Town from the west.

“I don’t know how this can be, but... Alas Ramus might be an existence even more amazing than demons or angels.”

“Huh?”

“Gevurah, Tiferet\*\*, Malchut, Keter, and Yesod. They’re all names of Sefirot, the jewels of the

Tree of Life that compose the world. Alas Ramus might be... the incarnation of Yesod.”

**\*\*In the original script, Maou lists Hod instead of Tiferet. However, the colors of the Sefirot used here appear to correspond to the Kabbalistic Queen Scale. According to this scale, based on the color of the balloon Maou picked out (deep yellow), Tiferet (yellow) makes more sense than Hod (orange), and Alas Ramus’s answer sounds like Tiferet in Japanese (she mispronounces all of them except Yesod). We believe that Maou listing Hod instead of Tiferet is a mistake in the original Japanese script.**

While Maou, Ashiya and the others were in the gondolas, Chiho sat on a bench, quietly occupying her time with self-loathing.

Now that she was alone and was able to analyze the situation objectively, she realized that she was in no position to criticize Rika for being nosy.

Chiho may have had a valid reason in letting Ashiya borrow her cellphone in case something happened to Maou, but in the end, she realized that she was only jealous of Emi for pretending to be a married to Maou.

“Maou-san said he trusted me, but I...”

Chiho felt she had wronged both Maou and Emi by betraying his trust.

As she thought more and more about it, she only grew more embarrassed.

“Maou-san... I’m so sorry...”

Superficial worries and jealousy had driven Chiho to do something she shouldn’t have done. She got up and headed down the stairs without waiting for Ashiya or Rika.

Not long after Chiho left, Maou, Emi, and Alas Ramus came out of their gondola.

“Phew, it sure is hot out here.”

“mufuu.”

Maou and Alas Ramus scowled as they were once again exposed to the heat after being cooled down in the gondola.

Emi silently emerged from the gondola after them.

“Thank you for ridiiing! Your photo is readyyyy!”

They turned to the source of the voice that called to them as they got off, The photo that had been taken before they got on the gondola had been printed out and inserted in a custom folding frame.

“oooh!!”

“...What a terrible face.”

Alas Ramus was moved to the core by the photo that had a picture of herself in it, and her eyes shone like stars, while Emi frowned as she saw herself in the picture with an expression that looked like she had just bitten down on a bitter insect.

“It comes as a set with this custom folding frame, and you can write your own message! It’s one thousand yen. We can print more if you’d like!”

“Huh? It’s not free?” Maou blurted out involuntarily, earning him a slap in the back of the head from Emi.

“Ugggh... a thousand yen...”

“daddy, daddy, dis! dis!”

Alas Ramus obviously wanted a copy of the photograph. However, considering the price of the photo paper, frame, and ink, just how much markup was added to make it a thousand yen?

“...One copy, please.”

Surprisingly, Emi quickly came to a decision, paid the thousand yen, and took the picture. She then handed it to Alas Ramus.

“waah!”

Alas Ramus opened the folding frame, saw the picture with Maou smiling strangely, Emi glaring bitterly, and herself, and gave a shout of joy. “H-hey, are you sure about this?”

“Don’t be so stingy about a thousand yen. You really don’t have your priorities straight, do you? Isn’t this her first picture?”

“Ye-yeah, but...”

“And let me be clear! When Emmy and Al come, don’t you dare show this to them! I have a reputation to uphold!”

“So it’s fine to show it to Ashiya and Suzuno or Chii-chan?”

“What’s the point of hiding it from them now? But keep it a secret from Lucifer.”

“How am I supposed to do that...?”

Maou gave a strained smile to Emi’s absurd demands, then leaned to Alas Ramus and said,

“Come on, Alas Ramus. Say thank you to Mommy.”

“sankyuu mommy!!”

Emi turned bright red at Alas Ramus’s loud voice that could be heard by all who were near the gondola entrance.

“I-I-I’m the mother, so of course I’d do this for you! I had to do this because your father doesn’t know any better!”

She blurted out excuses that made no sense, but it was obvious that Emi had just wanted to do something for Alas Ramus, and it had nothing to do with Maou.

“Le-let’s go!”

Emi hid her face and quickly walked down the stairs. Maou and Alas Ramus followed suit.

At that precise moment,

“Hold up a sec, Emi. I got a call.”

“Huh? ...Oh, me too. Alas Ramus, wait right there.”

Maou and Emi got phone calls at the same time from Urushihara and Suzuno, respectively.

“We lost them!?”

Ashiya panicked as he looked around the gondola entrance and saw that no one was around.

Since they had only been only two gondolas behind, the others shouldn’t have been more than a few minutes ahead of them.

They ran downstairs to the shopping floor and looked down from there, but they couldn’t find Maou or Emi.

“I-I wonder where Chiho-chan went, too...”

She had just been inside the air conditioned gondola, but Rika's face was hot.

“Maybe Chiho-chan is following them... wh-what should we do, Ashiyasan?”

This was not good at all. If they couldn't find Chiho or Emi right away, she would be forced to be alone with Ashiya.

“...Even if I wanted to do something... I don't have any way of contacting them...”

“Huh?”

“I don't have a cellphone.”

“What? Seriously!?”

Having finally been freed from the locked gondola, Rika was finally returning to her usual self.

“I was planning on borrowing Sasaki-san's if the need arose... but if this is the case...”

It was nearly evening, but there was still a fair crowd of people around them. Finding Maou and Emi would be like finding a needle in a haystack. “... Alright then. Well, this might get messy, but...”

Rika took out her own cellphone, and called Emi’s number.

“Oh, hello? Hey Emiii?”

Ashiya nearly screamed at Rika’s reckless action of calling Emi so suddenly, but she put her finger to her mouth to tell Ashiya to be quiet. He obeyed, as he had no other choice.

“Hm? Oh, not muuuch, but I was just wondering if your date with Maou-san is going weeell... ahaha, sorry, sorry. It’s for the little girl, riiight. Did I call at a bad time? Are you guys eating right no... huh?”

Rika pretended to tease Emi in order to find out where she was, but she got an unexpected answer.

“You’re on your way home?”

“What?”

Ashiya was also shocked. Rika tried her best to not let her surprise show in her voice.

“Oooh, I got it, the little girl is tired out, huh. Yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, if she had fun, then that’s great. Oh, you’re headed to the train station. Okay, got it. Sorry I called you all of a sudden, get home safely, ‘kay? Yeaah, okay... so that’s what’s happened.”

Rika hung up and said to Ashiya.

“So they went home... sigh... I see.”

“Then there’s no point staying here, right? Perhaps Sasaki-san went home as well.”

“I don’t know if she did, but I really feel bad about this... Next time you see her, can you apologize to her for me?”

“Of course. I should get going as well. Thank you for everything today.”

“Oh, um, hold on!”

Ashiya was about to start running after Maou and the others, but Rika stopped him without thinking.

“Yes?”

Although she had stopped him, Rika hadn’t thought about what she was actually going to say, and couldn’t form any words for a while.

“Um, uh, that’s right! Um, here!”

Rika took a memo pad out of her bag. She ripped a page out, quickly scribbled something on it, and handed it to Ashiya.

“Is this... a cell phone number?”

“Th... it’s my...”

“Your number?”

Ashiya asked, carefully examining the paper that was handed to him.

“It’s for um, if something happens, call me maybe, and I might be able to help you out.”

Even Rika didn't know what she meant when she said "if something happens," but she had to break the silence somehow as the awkward atmosphere was unbearable.

"I see.. of course. Perhaps I may ask for your assistance again."

"...Huh?"

Ashiya agreed to something she had made up on the spot out of panic.

"As I said earlier, I don't own a cellphone, so if something were to arise, I will give you a call from Maou's..."

Ashiya stopped mid-sentence, and looked like as if he had remembered something, then shook his head. Normally, all outside contact made from Demon King Castle was done through Maou's cellphone, but Ashiya didn't think it would a good idea to share his master's number with someone else.

"No... I learned a valuable lesses today. Even if this stretches our budget somewhat, I will obtain a cell phone as well. Could you lend me your assistance in purchasing one?"

Rika's face instantly turned bright red.

“Suzuki-san, you are employed at a company that manufactures cellphones, correct? I don’t know at this time if I will end up buying a device from the company you work for, but if it doesn’t inconvenience you, your assistance in helping me make my choice would be greatly appreciated.”

When Rika came to her senses again, she gave an exaggerated nod as if she were going to fall over.

“Thank you. Then I will contact you in the near future. It will most likely be from a public phone.”

“Sure...”

“Well then, if you’ll excuse me.”

Ashiya gave thanks, and finally began running towards Kourakuen Station.

“No way... what... what did I just do?”

Meanwhile, Rika could not move from where she stood, even after Ashiya was long gone.

“What do I do... What do I do.... What do I do?”

Eventually, she began walking shakily towards Suidoubashi Station in the opposite direction from Ashiya.

## **Chapter 4: The Demon King Learns the Pain of Losing Something Precious**

魔王、大切なものを失う苦しみを知る



A great, vast world existed in the midst of the darkness between stars that did not twinkle, accompanied by two worlds of blue and red.

A bright, blue world, overflowing with life, bearing a cross-shaped crest.

And next to the world full of life was another world of a deep blue color, spanned by a silent wasteland not even disturbed by wind.

In the midst of that wasteland stood a great tree of the same color as that world.

The great tree that stood in the endlessly flat world had existed for countless years, and would continue to endure for even more countless years, but had the appearance of a dead, inglorious tree.

It had no leaves to cover itself from the heavens, no flowers to color it with the season of spring, and no fruits to sing of its fertility. Only the dispirited tree stood for time eternal.

Ten small shrines surrounded the great tree of the deep blue world, and each shrine's entrance had a "name" carved into it.

The first shrine, Keter. Next, Chachmah. And the rest, in the order of Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and lastly, Malchut.

They were the names of "some beings." The whereabouts of those who used that language were unknown.

No pillars or roofing that would be commonly found in temples or monks' shacks could be found. Ten perfect spheres that looked like they had been carved out of stone lay on the ground around the great tree, almost as if they were fruits that had fallen from it.

A moving figure finally appeared in the blue, vast wasteland where the great tree stood.

A large shadow emerged from the sphere with the engraving that read “Yesod” in the lost language.

“Great, we found it faster than we thought we would.”

It was a man’s voice.

As the shadow murmured quietly, four pillars of light appeared which also took human-like forms appeared next to it.

“I thought we’d be looking for it again for another few hundreds of years after we lost track of its signal in the central continent, but seems like we didn’t completely lose it after all. There was a resonance signal between the ‘fragments’ from a fateful place.”

The four figures that had emerged from the pillars of light reacted in shock at the news.

“It’s where Sariel went missing recently, and...”

The large-figured man looked up to the gigantic, living-yet-dead tree.

“The woman who stole and shattered the Yesod Sefira is there, too.”

The large man extended his hand to the starlit sky, and a bright opening that connected to an alternate world appeared in an instant.

“Let’s go. We’ll restore the ‘Tree of Life’ to the way it was meant to be.”

The five figures disappeared into the Gate.

The last remaining traces of light from the Gate disappeared, and silence once again visited the deep blue world.

Two worlds silently watched the five figures that stood in the world with the gigantic tree. Ente Isla, the world overflowing with life and engraved by a cross-shaped seal of continents, and the red world that circled, yet came closer to the world of life, just as the deep blue world did.

\*\*\*

A moment shortly before Maou and Emi got off of the ferris wheel gondola at Tokyo Big Egg Town.

“Hey, Bell! You there!?”

“Ngh... wh-what is it, Lucifer?”

Suzuno was caught off guard by Urushihara, as he hardly ever came out of his closet, much less asked questions with an urgent tone.

She had just finished making udon and was having a late lunch, and nearly choked.

Urushihara eyed the large helping of udon in the traditional Japanese basket tray, but his state didn’t escape Suzuno’s gaze. “None of that is for you.”

“I probably don’t need any of your udon, I ordered pizza just now... I mean, that’s not what I wanted to talk about!”

Urushihara nonchalantly let slip words that might invoke Ashiya’s fury to the point that it would return him to his demon form, and then asked Suzuno, “Did you sense that just now?”

“Sense what?”

Suzuno tilted her head, having no idea what Urushihara was talking about.

“I figured you didn’t. You can get in touch with Emilia, right? I’ll call Maou. Tell them to get back as soon as possible.”

“What is it? What is going on?”

Suzuno’s expression grew serious after witnessing Urushihara’s extremely rare display of urgency.

“No time to explain, just hurry. I don’t know why, but a big Gate opened somewhere in Tokyo just now. There’s probably going to be trouble.”

Urushihara said nothing more, and ran back to Demon King Castle and opened Skyphone on his laptop. Suzuno saw that his serious actions could not possibly be a joke, and took out her phone and dialed Emi.

It was at that instant that five figures appeared in the yard of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

“Hey, no one told me we had guests.”

Maou smiled confidently, but hid Alas Ramus behind his back.

“So who was here first?”

“I am sorry, Demon King.... we were taken completely off guard.”

“Weell, I’ll admit that I took their speed lightly.”

Suzuno muttered bitterly, but Urushihara showed no sense of remorse and replied in his usual nonchalant tone.

“Weell, don’t blame theem. They even tried to call you to warn yooou.”

The person who greeted Maou, Emi, and Alas Ramus when they returned to Villa Rosa Sasazuka was neither Urushihara nor Suzuno.

“Besides, we haven’t laid a finger on anyoooone. I think it’s best if we just talk and come to a peaceful solution, so I hope we can get through this without any troubleee.”

The air in Demon King Castle was different.

The difference was that its occupancy limit was being completely ignored and the temperature was steadily rising.

A logical result of a six-tatami room filled with ten people. To be more precise, the only actual human among the ten in the room was Suzuno Kamazuki.

“Gabriel.”

“That’s mee! How’dya know? Have we met?”

The obnoxiously enthusiastic, carefree giant with the personality that would make one want to punch him in the face seemed to be the leader of the guests.

He had deep blue hair and eyes that showed no sense of urgency. He was as tall as Ashiya and built like a muscular wrestler. He also wore a toga similar to those worn in ancient Greece, but it did not suit him at all.

Inside Demon King Castle were four other men who had come with the giant Maou had called “Gabriel.” One of them was holding an excessively ornamented longsword to Suzuno’s throat, and the other three sat crosslegged, surrounding Urushihara.

“I’d heard that there was a giant who’d give you a headache just by talking to him among the archangels.”

“That’s mean, talking behind my back like that. Who said that?”

“Besides, you’re the guardian angel of the Yesod Sefira, aren’t you?”

“Ew, I’m not giving you anything just because you’re flattering me.”

“Stop that, you’re draining me. I don’t want any questions or answers, just tell me what you’re here for.”

“Give me the child hiding behind you, and if you can, Emilia’s holy sword too. Oh, and we ate the pizza Lucifer ordered from Pizza Cap. Sorry.”

“What the hell were you doing until we got back!?”

Even Maou had gotten angry, and Urushihara drew himself back.

“Oh, since we ate it, we’ll pay for it.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about! No, I am worried about it, but that’s not the point!”

Maou added the last bit to not invoke Ashiya’s fury.

“Fine, I take that back! If you don’t give that child back, don’t think you’ll see that pizza money ever again!”

“Where the hell do you see a parent giving up a child to a kidnapper because of pizza money!?” Maou screamed back. “Why did it take you so long to show up? How many days do you think it’s been since she got here?”

“Well, it might be days to you, but we’ve spent hundreds of years looking for her, so let’s not get hung up on a day or two. I thought it was a dream when we sensed the Yesod fragment. When that child’s fragment was taken out of your castle in Ente Isla, we were pretty much in despaaair. We thought we’d have to spend another hundreds of years looking for it agaaain,” said Gabriel, and then,

“Oh! But you’re the one who said you didn’t want any questions! A-anyway! Are you going to give her back or not!?”

He did not follow the preceding example at all and did not have a shred of resemblance to it, but combined with his desire for Emi’s holy sword, all this meant was no mistaking that he was an agent of the heavenly world; in other words, an angel.

He did not refute his identity as “Gabriel,” either. By all means, he was the closest thing there was to an actual parent to Alas Ramus.

“...”

However, Alas Ramus openly glared at Gabriel suspiciously. No matter how one looked at her, she did not show a hint of friendliness or affection towards him.

“Hey, Alas Ramus. Do you not like that old man? He wants to take you with him.” “no!! i hate him!!!!” “Whaaaaaat!!?”

Gabriel gave an exaggerated reaction to Alas Ramus’s answer.

“Don’t call me an old man. You’re hurting my feelings.”

“That’s what he was upset about?” Even his henchmen around Suzuno and Urushihara gave a tired expression.

“markoo, keteh, bina, ko’mah all took away! i hate yu!!”

“Uuugh, stop saying that kind of stuuuff...”

Gabriel placed his head in his hand at Alas Ramus’s words.

“...I don’t understand it all, but looking at how much Alas Ramus doesn’t want to, I couldn’t give her back to you even if you were her real parent.”

“Whaat...? Then the holy sword...”

“Absolutely not. Even if God Himself begs me, I won’t give up my holy sword until I’ve achieved my goal.”

“...Uuugh, so annoying. What’s wrong with this demon king and this hero? So annoying. I don’t want to have to resort to force, but with that child on the line, I can’t refuse. Please, can you give her back to me?”

“I refuse.”

“She’s mine to begin with, ya know?”

“I’m her parent now.”

“No matter what?”

“No matter what.”

“You might turn all of Heaven into your enemy.”

“I’d rather die than make her cry.”

“...Sheesh, seriously. I really don’t want to do this, you know?”

Gabriel muttered sadly, and then,

“!!!!”

He began emitting holy power from his entire body like a jet engine, letting out enough pressure to flatten someone against the wall.

It happened in the blink of an eye , and Maou staggered in reaction.

“I really don’t like using force. I’ll listen to you if you give up, so tell me whenever you want to.”

Gabriel’s attitude had not changed at all, and he was standing in front of Maou before he realized it.

“Whoa!”

In the corner of Maou’s field of vision, he saw that Gabriel had blown a hole in a tatami mat just from taking a step.

“Even if you were to regain your demon king powers, I’d probably beat you, you know? So, please? Will you return the child to me?”

The quiet yet overwhelming pressure and holy power would have made any being fall prostrate.

“...Seriously? Damn it...”

Maou gulped. He had never experienced an enemy this overwhelming in his countless battles.

And that wasn't because he had become weak.

The reason was because this was his first encounter with a guardian angel of a Sefirah that was on a completely different level from other angels.

However, although Maou was shocked, he never backed down.

“No, I’m not giving up. I’m the king of demons who loves anything that makes humans or angels miserable. I’ll raise her to be a great successor to me once I’ve conquered the world.”

“You have lost your powers, so I’ll at least take it easy on you... Like I said, I’ll listen to you if you want to give up.”

And thus, the sign that all negotiations had ended was given.

Even though Gabriel had given Maou a handicap, the outcome of the battle was clear before it had even begun.

It would not have been strange for the touch of a lazy swing of an arm to pulverize Maou.

However, there was something that could stop an archangel’s attack that brimmed with holy light.

“Maou-san!!!!”

It was a simple yell. Not a supernatural power. Not a blade. A simple voice.

However, that voice had stopped the archangel’s attack.

The entire group turned to look at where the voice had come from.

“...Maou... san.”

It was Chiho.

Chiho had run up the apartment stairs and looked in, sweating and panting.

“Chiho-chan!? No! Run!”

Emi quickly warned Chiho at her sudden appearance, but Chiho shook her head.

“...I thought I really should apologize for what I did today...”

“What you did today?”

“And... I didn’t know this was happening... I know I can’t do anything, but I couldn’t just keep quiet anymore...”

Maou still had no idea that he had been tailed by Chiho, Ashiya, and Rika.

Chiho had returned to Sasazuka before anyone else, but she hadn’t been able to hold in her regret for betraying Maou’s trust in her, and had ran to Demon King Castle as fast as she could, even though she had already gotten home.

“...You seem like a human from this world. But this is not somewhere you belong. Calling the police or whatever is useless, and you might not believe me, but Sadao Maou and I are...” “I already know!” Chiho yelled, interrupting Gabriel.

“I’m Japanese. But I already know. About Maou-san... Demon King Satan, Hero Emilia, and Ente Isla. And you’re... probably an angel who came to pick up Alas Ramus-chan.”

Gabriel shook his head in surprise upon hearing Chiho’s words.

“Oh? I’m surprised that people from alternate worlds could be so naturally friendly with each other, but how did you know I was an angel? Do I look that godly?”

Chiho frowned at Gabriel, who was still cracking jokes in this situation, and replied,

“...Pretty much all the terrible things that have been happening to Maou-san and Yusa-san have been because of angels.”

Chiho gave an answer that was perhaps too honest.

Maou, Emi, and Suzuno’s jaws dropped, Gabriel and his subordinates scowled, and Urushihara burst out laughing by himself.

“I won’t say anything about what Lucifer did, but what did Sariel do?”

Even Gabriel was not happy about the implications of that bluntly honest answer.

“It’s true that Sariel and I haven’t been exactly like what this world portrays ‘angels’ to be.”

“Hey, public perception is still important, so let’s not do anything that would tarnish our reputation any further.”

“Isn’t it too late for that? Your image is already pretty bad. And these guys don’t look any better than third-rate yakuza henchmen.”

Urushihara casually glanced at the four subordinates that surrounded him and Suzuno. However, for some reason, they drew back slightly as if they were afraid of Urushihara.

Urushihara grinned broadly at their reaction, and Gabriel let out a sigh.

“Well, anyway. Sorry, but we’re in the middle of something. I want to just negotiate things peacefully, but you should get out of here just in case things get rough around here.”

“Heh, I like that line. Sounds like some third-rate’s bluff. I don’t dislike that.”

No one was listening to Urushihara’s jabs anymore. Because,

“Please, don’t take Alas Ramus-chan.”

Chiho fell to the floor before Gabriel.

She already understood that the time had come.

Even if she knew that it might have been her ego, and even if she didn't know for sure what would bring true happiness to Alas Ramus, everything she had been seeing until now had put her into motion.

“Alas Ramus-chan really loves Maou-san and Yusa-san. Please, I'm begging you...”

Tears fell next to Chiho's feet.

“Chii-chan...”

“Chiho-chan...”

“S-stop that! Raise your head!”

Somehow, the action of a powerless, ordinary, human, high school girl had completely thrown Gabriel off course.

“Come on! Knock that off! That makes me look like I'm the bad guy! It's like I'm a credit shark character from some old-school TV drama who says something like ‘Shut up, I'm just doing my job too!’ and completely ignore some girl's tears and grab the shoulder of some broke guy!”

“What the hell is he talking about?”

Maou tilted his head in confusion, as he had never seen a TV drama before.

“Please... please...”

“Gaaah!! I said, stop crying! Seriously, knock that off! This is worse than being attacked by a murder weapon! Hey you, come on!”

Gabriel had already stopped paying attention to Maou and Emi and was completely focused on placating Chiho.

“Please... please...”

However, Chiho never raised her head. She continued to beg Gabriel.

“Aaaaargh!”

Gabriel flapped his arms and legs for a bit, and indignantly said,

“You have until tomorrow!!”

“Lord Gabriel!?”

“I beg your pardon, sir!?”

The men that surrounded Urushihara and Suzuno stared at Gabriel with incredulous expressions.

However, Gabriel paid no attention to them and looked down at Chiho with an indecisive face as she looked back up at him with teary eyes.

“Uuuugh, I have my problems too, you know!? So I’m coming here first thing tomorrow, okay!? Take your commemorative photos or whatever you want! But don’t think that you can get away from us!”

“Re-really!?”

Chiho’s face suddenly glowed brightly.

“...Uuugh.”

Gabriel looked away, unable to make eye contact with such a face.

“To-tomorrow! I’m not waiting any longer! A-and Demon King! If you gather your power and try anything funny, you’re going to be sorry!”

“T-thank you so much!”

Gabriel had tried to have the last word, but Chiho’s sincere thanks overpowered him.

“We-we’re leaving!”

The overwhelming holy power had disappeared without a trace before anyone had realized it, and as he took stomping steps,

“...Even my last line sounds like some third-rate villain’s!”

Gabriel insulted himself, perked up his shoulders as if he were doing it on purpose, and he and his subordinates began walking out of the apartment.

As if being round up by a mother duck, the rest of his subordinates also walked out, bumping their shoulders one by one into Maou angrily, a textbook definition of group of third-rate villains.

“Ogh, ugh, uhf, hey!”

Maou voiced his complaint against enemies he could not match up against in a fight, and watched their backs bitterly. As Gabriel, who was first in line, reached the stairs, “Wah!”

The sound of something heavy crashing down could be heard.

“Lord Gabriel!”

“Lord Gabriel!!”

Judging by their reactions, Gabriel seemed to be what had fallen down the stairs. Furthermore,

“Ah!”

“Wah!”

“Whoa!?”

“Ngh!”

The sounds of four men’s short screams and four potential energies of four masses falling down were heard next.

“Give me a break!!”

The sounds of Gabriel yelling at his subordinates outside could be heard, but they gradually disappeared.

And as if taking their place,

“I have returned... sigh, it’s so hot...”

Ashiya had returned, lackadaisically wiping the sweat off his face. He had no idea about the events that had just transpired, and even smiled broadly at seeing that Maou and Alas Ramus had made it home safely.

“I came across some people on the way in. Was it MHK’s bill collectors again?”

“...You, how do I say it... you’re so peaceful... but where were you to begin with at a time like this, idiot?”

“Huh? Huh? What?”

Ashiya finally noticed the cold atmosphere around him that contrasted sharply with the hot weather outside.

“...Anyway, leaving the clueless Ashiya aside,”

The one to break the cold, silent atmosphere after the noise was long gone was Urushihara. “What are we going to do?” \*\*\*

The sun had set and the curtain of night had fallen on Demon King Castle.

“oyuuuu...”

In the demon king’s chamber of the “castle” that bore his name stood two figures: Demon King Satan, who aimed to conquer Ente Isla and struck fear in the hearts of all who lived there, and Hero Emilia Justina, who vowed to stop that ambition. They were at a standstill.

“dauuuu...”

The entire Demon King Castle was filled with tension and hostility where the drop of a pin would have caused a battle to break out.

“nyaaaaauuu...”

A gentle breeze, a drop of rain, or a pebble on the road would have been enough to throw the tense atmosphere into chaos.

“maaameeee, maaameeee!”

And just when the tension and hostility was about to reach its peak,

“wapu!”

The figure that had been running around the demon king and hero got tangled in its own feet and nearly hit its head on the corner of the table in the center of the king’s chamber.

“‘!!’”

The demon king and hero both reacted extending their arms.

Their save was successful, but because they reacted at the same time, the demon king’s hand touched the hero’s hand. “Do-don’t touch me!” “Ow! Yo-your nail...”

The flustered hero slapped the demon king’s hand away, and a red line was left on the demon king’s hand. There was no blood; just a red line on his skin.

“What’s gotten into you all of a sudden!?”

“You were the one who wanted to leave it to others and didn’t want any trouble, so mind your own business!!”

“T-that’s my line!”

“no! i dun like fight! no!”

A figure much, much smaller than the demon king or the hero had wedged between their hostile verbal exchange.

“Oh, um, we’re not fighting, Alas Ramus!”

“Th-that’s right! So don’t cry, okay?”

“...weally?”

As if trying to verify the adults’ suspicious, half-hearted words, Alas Ramus looked up at the two of them with the most worried look they had ever seen.

“Re-really! Really!”

“Reeeallyyy.”

“ehe.”

The little girl believed the habitually lying demon king and hero, and gave a great grin of relief and clinged to her “mommy,” Emi.

“mommy, will yuu always be with me?”

“Uh, uum...”

“...! ...!”

Maou made frantic hand signals from an angle where Alas Ramus couldn’t see. Emi ignored him and asked,

“What do you want, Alas Ramus? Do you want me... do you want your mommy to always be with you?”

“yah. mommy, we oohways toge’er.”

“Uuuuh...”

Emi was torn from the bottom of her heart, but she tried her hardest to not let that show on her face and hid behind a smile.

“daddy too!”

“Yeah...”

Maou did not attempt to resist her confirmation.

And the awkward silence visited once again.

Meanwhile, Alas Ramus continued to be oblivious to the tense silence and attempted to climb onto Emi.

With Chiho’s sudden arrival, the worst-case scenario of Alas Ramus being taken away after Maou and Emi were injured and defeated was averted.

However, it merely seemed to delay the inevitable.

No matter how much Alas Ramus resisted, neither Maou nor Suzuno, the expert in theology, could deny the fact that the Yesod Sefirah was from Heaven to begin with.

And furthermore, none of those who had come into contact with Alas Ramus had any means of resisting Gabriel.

Sariel’s special ability was an outlier, and Emi and Suzuno had some ability to fight.

However, it was also true that neither of them had a reason to fight.

After Gabriel had left, Chiho unsurprisingly expressed her doubts about the unfamiliar “Tree of

Life.”

“The Tree of Life is supposedly a tree that exists in Heaven which created the world, and whoever eats the fruit from the Tree of Life will supposedly gain

eternal life and unlimited wisdom. Supposedly, the first humans that were made by God ate the fruit and were exiled from paradise.”

“Earth also has a story similar to that. Adam and Eve from the Bible...”  
Suzuno nodded to Chiho, and continued to talk.

“That tree’s ten fruits, called ‘Sefirot’ are said to correspond to various elements of life in the world, such as planets, colors, metals, jewels... for example, the first Sefirah, ‘Keter,’ represents soul, thought, and imagination. Its number is one, its precious jewel is diamond, its color is white, its planet is that of the King of Hades, and its guardian angel is Metatron. Meanwhile, the fourth Sefirah, ‘Chesed,’ represents the kindness of God, its number is four, its metal is tin, its color is blue, its planet is that of the Thunder God, and its guardian angel is Zadkiel, and so on. Each of the ten Sefirot have characteristics that correspond to elements of the world, and the reason Alas Ramus is attracted to brightly colored objects must be because of the influence of the Sefirot’s colors on her. By the way, the ninth sefira, ‘Yesod,’ represents what is called the astral body, the mind and self. Its number is nine, its’ metal is silver, its color is violet, its planet is the planet of blue heavens, and its guardian angel is Gabriel.”

The rest of the group was speechless for a short while at Suzuno’s explanation.

“...You... have all that memorized?”

Maou asked inquisitively.

“It is the very basic foundation of theology.”

“I don’t get it. Just give us the short summary.”

“Are you not a former archangel!?”

Suzuno was shocked at Urushihara’s lazy words.

“Come on... Urushihara-san’s just being Urushihara-san.”

Chiho’s words did not completely satisfy Suzuno, but she understood her point.

“But why did she call herself ‘Alas Ramus’ and not ‘Yesod?’”

This question was from Emi.

“We do not know whether this child is a fragment or not, nor do we know who did it or how, but it does not seem like Gabriel was the parent who gave her that name. He has not used the name ‘Alas Ramus’ once so far. If we were to go by the legend and assume Alas Ramus really is a fragment of the ‘Yesod’ Sefirah... or a part of it, then what Gabriel said makes sense. In other words, the elements that the Yesod Sefira represents are in danger. The world is in danger. For Gabriel to maintain the balance of the world as a guardian angel, he needs Alas Ramus.”

“No... then Alas Ramus-chan has to go back after all...” said Chiho sadly. However,

“But that may not necessarily be true.”

Chiho was shocked that Suzuno refuted her own explanation so plainly.

“The Tree of Life and Sefirot are said to be the source of what composes the world, and guardian angels watch over it all, but that is all based on the sacred texts and legends. No one has ever seen it for themselves, so there is proof that this is all true.”

“Proof...?”

“For example, the tenth Sefirah, ‘Malchut,’ is...”

As soon as Suzuno said that,

“malkoo!”

Alas Ramus responded to the word.

“...Come to think of it, Alas Ramus said Malchut was her best friend or something like that on the ferris wheel. Does that mean Malchut or the other Sefirot have personae like Alas Ramus?” Suzuno thought hard for a moment, then shook her head at Maou’s question.

“I have never heard of such occurrences... but that may have something to do with what I was just about to say.”

“Oh, sorry for interrupting. Go on.”

Maou urged Suzuno, who nodded and resumed her explanation.

“Malchut is located on the lower part of the Tree of Life, and represents the material world. Its number is ten, its precious jewel is crystal, its color is bright yellow or olive or several others, and its planet is the Planet of Life — in other words, Ente Isla. If we were to believe the legends, if Malchut really had disappeared for one reason or another, crystals, the color yellow, and the existence of Ente Isla would be in danger.”

Suzuno stopped talking for a moment to look at others.

“However, think about this logically. Can you imagine every crystal in the universe disappearing at once because a fruit of a tree in some other world disappeared? What physical phenomenon can explain a fruit that could threaten the existence of oceans and continents? Even the story in the sacred texts is being debated even today, whether the ‘first humans’ that ate the forbidden fruit were related to the Sefirot or not, and no conclusions have been reached. Like the demon king just said, each Sefirah may have a humanlike incarnation. In other words, the assumption that the Tree of Life forms the foundations of the world is only a legend, and there is nothing that proves it. There are numerous humans that have communicated with the

heavenly world, but none have gone there physically. Therefore, I do not believe that the world would be in danger if Alas Ramus were missing.”

“You’re pretty blunt about this.”

“...However, we cannot deny the existence of the heavenly world or angels regardless of what we think, and if they come to retrieve the Yesod fragment, then we have no way of resisting. There is nothing we can do.”

Everyone in the room turned to look at Alas Ramus, who sat in Maou’s lap.

“...Man, we’re stuck between a rock and a hard place.”

Maou dug into his ears as the rest of the group looked at him.

“Hey, Alas Ramus,”

“what daddy?”

“That old man wants to take you back with him. Do you want to go?”

“no!!!”

A definitive, emphatic refusal.

“I see.”

Maou slapped his crossed knees.

“Alright, that’s all for discussions. If they do anything that upsets Alas Ramus even a little, I’m fighting back to the bitter end.”

“Wa-wait a second!!”

Emi objected, expectedly.

“Do you even understand the situation you’re in!? Bell and I can’t resist Gabriel openly, and Alciel and Lucifer haven’t regained their powers, either!!”

“I know. That’s why I said I’ll do it.”

“You? By yourself? Are you stupid!? What can you possibly do on your own!?”

“Hey, stop pestering me. What do you lose if I take a stand by myself and get beaten to a pulp?”

“...Um... we-well...”

“I’m just being selfish and don’t want to give back Alas Ramus. And my reason is because Alas Ramus doesn’t want to go back. You humans get to finally celebrate the end of the demon king, and the Yesod fragment will be back in Heaven where it belongs. Do you have any complaints?” “Bu... but!!”

“Demon King! Is that what you really want!?”

“Maou-san!”

Emi could not be satisfied with such an idea, and Suzuno and Chiho could not stay silent. The trio drew in close to Maou and his eyes opened wide.

“He-hey, Ashiya, Urushihara, say something.”

“...Ho-however, I can’t agree with you, my lord...”

“...I... well, I don’t really care what happens to you, but I’m starting to like living in the closet. I’m not sure what to think, either”

“Wh-what, even you two?”

“You fool! Do you still not understand!?”

Suzuno yelled at Maou.

Alas Ramus was shocked by Suzuno’s aggressive tone and got out of Maou’s lap.

“suzu-neecha, no! don pick on daddy!”

She stood as firm as she could in front of Suzuno with her arms wide open to protect her daddy from danger. Suzuno calmly moved Alas Ramus aside, and once again grabbed Maou by his collar.

“It does not matter whether you are the demon king or not! But none of us... not even Lucifer wishes to see Alas Ramus taken somewhere she does not want to go!! If she were going to be taken away to somewhere she does not want to go, even you would be a better option!!”

“...I don’t know if a clergywoman should be saying something like that...”

“I am a clergywoman, yes, but I am also a politician! Who do they think they are, suddenly appearing and acting like they have authority over something they lost for hundreds of years!? The Tree of Life is a lie!”

She reached a conclusion unbecoming of a clergywoman, without logic or proof.

“...In other words...”

“What!?”

“What do you want?”

“...What is it?”

“What is it, my lord?”

“Whaaat...?”

Maou smiled with his teeth showing, with an expression like as if he was concerned.

“You all love Alas Ramus, right?”

“...”

Suzuno gulped in reaction.

“...Thanks.”

Words that should never come out of the demon king’s mouth. Yet, they had already come out many times.

“But going against someone sacred is the demon king’s specialty. It’s not a burden for any of you to bear. I’m just acting out of my selfishness to keep something like a child that belongs to God for myself. So if I end up doing something against Gabriel, you don’t have to do anything.”

Suzuno was speechless, and opened her hand that held his collar.

“...If it all goes well, then that’d be great. It’d be like going out with a bang.”

“Hey!”

“Stop!”

“Maou-san!”

“My lord!”

“...Seriously?”

“Shut up!”

Maou waved his arms angrily as he was surrounded by weak responses.

“This isn’t some little kid’s comic book! The enemy’s not someone that I can beat with some emotional high or anything like that. It’s only natural that I prepare for the worst and do some risk management! Hey, Emi!” “What do you want!?”

“Stay here for the night!”

At that moment, everyone in the room tried to remember the definition of risk management. “...Whaaaaaat!?”

“How is this risk management!?”

Emi sat glaring at Maou, while holding Alas Ramus in her lap. Meanwhile, Alas Ramus happily kicked her legs up and down as she was held by her mommy.

“Well, if I end up fighting Gabriel, my brilliant strategic plan is to drag you into this as payback for all the times you’ve dragged me into your problems.”

“...You’re not serious, are you?”

“I’m seventy percent serious. I think I’ve said this before, but I don’t think you’ll suddenly be struck by lightning for cleaning up some trouble every once in a while.”

“I can hear the clap of thunder just from you suggesting that I clean up trouble for the demon king.”

“clap?”

Perhaps accidentally, Alas Ramus clapped her hands as she repeated a word Emi said, and for a moment, the atmosphere around them relaxed.

“Well, I’m seventy percent serious, but I also have to think about what I have to do with the other thirty percent. I’m not asking for you to take my side, but if a fight were to break out, at least protect Alas Ramus from harm.”

“Well... um, if it’s just that, then... but, what do you mean, ‘have to think about the other thirty percent?’ If you don’t know that, then you might not be able to protect what you’re trying to protect. What are you actually thinking? Are you really just trying to make memories with her?”

According to what Maou had said, , he didn’t plan on just losing without a fight, but he didn’t seriously believe he’d be able to win, either. Therefore, he

seemed to have planned to make as many fun memories for Alas Ramus as possible so that she could live to the fullest when she was finally taken away.

And the conclusion he arrived at was to sleep together as a family, with no one else.

Alas Ramus had been a good girl until now, but occasionally she would get lonely and long for her mommy. Therefore, it was only logical for a loving parent to let her sleep with her mommy, even if it was for just one night.

Chiho had agreed with this plan wholeheartedly, and Suzuno also gave her consent, albeit with a grim expression. Ashiya was completely against it, but eventually agreed to the plan under the condition that he would be on standby in Suzuno's unit next door, ready to take action at a moment's notice.

Urushihara didn't care where he slept as long as he had his laptop with him.

Since there was no guarantee at all that anyone there would be safe, and therefore with the condition that Chiho returned home right away, Emi grudgingly agreed to stay at Demon King Castle.

Ashiya walked Chiho home, then moved to Suzuno's room along with Urushihara. The group was strangely divided into different rooms with friends and enemies together under the same roof.

Maou answered Emi's question simply, with a casual expression.

“I’m just putting my life on a line as a parent to protect my child. Either way, don’t worry too much about it. When things go down, I probably won’t give you any trouble.”

“...Where do you get that kind of confidence from?”

“I don’t have any basis for it. But it’s weird. I feel like I can do anything if it’s for Alas Ramus.”

“You, the demon king, are saying that you’re responsible for someone else? Weren’t you the one who just said just having an emotional high won’t do anything?”

“That’s probably why this is happening to me. It’s retribution. But even the people that died because of my army’s invasion probably would have put their lives on the line and never given up to the very end for their children. Then why can’t I do the same and put my life on the line for my kid?”

Even though Emi had asked Maou a question filled with cynicism, having her question answered with such a calm tone made her flustered instead.

“...Wh-what are you talking about? ... You demon king, why are you talking like you understand everything?” mumbled Emi as she felt as if she were the one who had hurt Maou, and couldn’t help but break eye contact.

Maou’s words reminded her of her memory of being pulled away from her father.

Just as Maou had said, this was retribution. This was something he deserved for being the demon king that killed countless people and separated her from her father.

But for reasons unknown to her, Emi could not suppress the tightening feeling in her stomach.

The demon king was feeling the same pain she had felt before. But why did she have this much pain in her chest?

“mommy?”

Alas Ramus looked up at Emi worriedly.

Maou looked at the two, and smiled ever so slightly.

“Well then! It’s bedtime!”

“Wh-whaat!?”

Maou declared with a bright tone as he looked up at the clock, dispelling Emi’s complicated mix of emotions.

“Isn’t it.... isn’t it a little too early!? It’s only ten-thirty!!”

“Even if we’re still fine, Alas Ramus has to go to bed now. Even if you stay up all night, it’s not going to change when Gabriel comes tomorrow.”

“B-but... but...”

“mooommy, sleep! we all sleep toge’er!”

“Uuuuhh...”

There were no futons at Demon King Castle. It only had several bath sheets, so even though the three of them were sleeping together, they would just sleep next to each other like sardines or the Japanese ご character for river. They wouldn’t be sleeping under the same cover.

To Emi, though, unlike previously when she had no choice but to stay for the night, she had to sleep close to Maou with Alas Ramus in between, and that was enough for her to feel against the idea.

However, Maou was in the same situation. He would never be able to turn his back on Emi in fear of her murdering him in his sleep as soon as Alas Ramus fell asleep.

Alas Ramus, on the other hand, was so ecstatic about being able to sleep together with Mommy and Daddy that one might doubt she would ever be able to fall asleep, and she began trying to pull the bedsheets out of the closet by herself, crumpling them all in the process.

“Oh, hey! You’ll trip again!”

“Alas Ramus, come to Mommy. We’ll make that useless daddy over there do it.”

Emi watched Maou get the makeshift beds ready.

“...Leave at least a dim light on, ” said Emi, just to make sure.

“Well yeah. If it’s pitch dark, Alas Ramus will get scared.

That wasn’t the reason Emi had in her mind, but it also made sense. The dark would obviously be scary to a little child.

“Oh... does Alas Ramus have a set of pajamas?”

“Pajamas? Oh... right. Come to think of it, those’re all the clothes she has.”

Maou put his hands together after taking out three bath sheets.

“Wait... you did laundry for her, right? And made her take baths?”

A few days had passed since Alas Ramus had arrived. Emi couldn’t hide her shock at the late revelation that the baby only had one article of clothing in the heat of summer.

“I took her to the public bath and washed her clothes. Don’t take me for an idiot. Since it’s the middle of summer, her clothes dry really quickly, and she just ran around the room in her diaper while they were drying.

“...Unbelievable.”

Maou ignored Emi’s incredulous expression and looked at Alas Ramus’s straw hat that was hanging on the wall.

“In the end, that hat was the only thing I bought for her. I wonder if the Unislo in Sasazuka has children’s clothes.”

“yooneslo?”

“Like I said, don’t make Unislo the be all, end all to all your clothing needs.

She's a girl, so why can't you try to find something cute for her?"

"Even if you say that, I don't even know where to begin."

"This is why men are..."

"Well, either way,"

Maou stood up calmly and pulled on the cord to the lights.

"I have to do my best for a tomorrow like that to come."

"...Uh, um, yeah."

Emi nodded naturally as she was caught off guard, and the complicated conversation went right over Alas Ramus's head.

"mommy, mommy, here!"

Alas Ramus slapped the tatami next to her repeatedly.

"Ye-yep, yep."

Emi lied down slowly and uncomfortably, while still being wary of Maou.

Seeing that Emi had completely lied down, Maou spurred Alas Ramus on by saying,

"Here, grab onto Mommy so she doesn't leave again."

"ya, grab!"

"Wah..."

Alas Ramus clung onto Emi with a smile that stretched across her face, and Emi hugged her back somewhat reluctantly.

"Huh? Alas Ramus... what are you holding?"

Emi had felt something hard and thin between her and Alas Ramus, who she was holding tightly.

“foto!”

It was the photograph in the folding frame that they had bought at the ferris wheel.

“So you really like it, do you? ...But if you hold onto it while you sleep, you’ll crumple it up. Let’s leave it next to the bed, okay?”

“au...”

Emi gently took the photograph and placed it next to their makeshift beds, and Alas Ramus followed it longingly with her eyes. Maou watched them, laughed slightly, and said,

“I’m turning the lights off.”

Maou turned the lights off after warning them, but left the dim light on as they had agreed to earlier.

“Umph.”

While her eyes were still unadjusted to the darkness, Emi felt her hair stand as she had heard Maou’s voice from much closer than she had expected.

“Yo-you’re too close!”

“I don’t want to be this close to you, either. But what can I do if Alas Ramus is grabbing me?”

Upon a closer look, the sleepy Alas Ramus had grabbed onto Emi and Maou’s shirts in each of her hands in the darkness.

“...If you try anything funny, I’ll kill you.”

“Like I said, don’t say something that would have a bad influence on a child.”

“What are you talking about? You’re bad influence incarnate.”

“Even if I am, you still love your daddy, right, Alas Ramus?”

“mm... nehehe...”

“Isn’t she disagreeing with you?”

“Nah, she’s just being really shy.”

“daddy, daddy, telme ah stowy...”

Alas Ramus asked for a bedtime story, with sleepiness mixed in her voice.

“Hm? A story? You don’t want to hear a story from Mommy?”

“mm... mommy tomooroh...”

“...”

Emi felt a prick in her heart as she heard Alas Ramus’s innocent plan.

Maou also gave a difficult smile, patted Alas Ramus’s stomach gently, and tried to think of something as he stared into space.

“Hmm, let’s see, how about we continue yesterday’s story?”

““kay.”

“Let’s see, where did I leave off...? Hmm...”

“a travelah met a angel.”

“Oh, that’s right, that’s right. Good job, you remembered. I’m proud of you.” “niheh.”

Emi watched and listened to Alas Ramus and Maou’s conversation curiously, and gulped when Maou suddenly looked in her direction.

“When she couldn’t fall asleep or cried because she was lonely, I had to tell her stories. Well, I didn’t realize that it was because of her diaper the first day, though.”

“...I didn’t ask you anything.”

Emi replied bluntly, but Maou ignored her and slowly began telling his story.

“Let’s see, um, a poor, hurt traveler was saved by an angel.”

The poor traveler who had been hurt by an evil demon was saved by a kind angel.

The angel told many stories that the traveler had never heard of.

Stories of high, high mountains. Stories of deep, deep oceans. Stories of thick, thick forests. Stories of kings. Stories of princesses. Stories of shops and money. Stories of vegetables and fish. Stories of soldiers. Stories of God. Stories of stars... The traveler excitedly listened to all the stories.

One day, the angel gave the traveler a charm as a present.

The traveler treasured the stories and the charm, and went on a journey again.

With the stories and the charm, the traveler became a king and lived happily ever after.

“...spuuu...”

“...The end... ‘kay, good night.”

It was unclear when Alas Ramus had fallen asleep, but Maou finished the story and quickly turned his back to Emi.

The sound of nocturnal summer insects filled every corner of the room.

“...Hey,”

“...What?”

Emi asked Maou while stroking the peacefully sleeping Alas Ramus’s hair, “What happened to the traveler after he became a king?”

Maou turned his face to Emi. Even in the dim lights, she could tell he had raised his eyebrows incredulously.

“You do know that it was just something I made up for a little girl’s bedtime story, right? How should I know? He lived happily ever after, the end. What more do you want?”

“Did the traveler never go back where he grew up, or look for the angel?”

“...Like I said...”

“It’s fine, isn’t it? I need to continue the story tomorrow. Give me something to work with.” “...”

Maou had no idea what Emi meant by “tomorrow.” With another tired expression, he looked away from Emi again.

“If you make the story too hard, little kids won’t get it. You just need to make it up like I did.”

Maou refused to answer Emi, which left her frowning in unsatisfaction.

“The story’s going to change.”

“Just go to sleep already. If I keep talking to you, we’re going to get into a fight and Alas Ramus will wake up.”

“Why did the traveler want a foreign country for himself when he was already a king? Wasn’t he supposed to have lived happily ever after?”

“...”

“...Well?”

His reply was a mumble that could barely be heard.

“He must have gotten greedy after becoming a king.”

“Huh?”

“...if Alas Ramus wants to hear more of the story, just make it up as you tell it,” said Maou quickly, then began snoring loudly as if it were intentional.

He shouldn’t have been able to fall asleep instantaneously like Alas Ramus, so it was most likely a sign that he wasn’t going to answer any more questions.

And as if responding to the snoring, Alas Ramus released her grip on Emi and stuck onto Maou’s stomach.

“...”

Emi watched Alas Ramus and patted her one last time. She then pulled the sheet up to her shoulders and turned her back to the two of them.

She looked towards the wall that separated them from Unit 202.

“...Honestly... I’m worried. I can’t just leave it all to him,” Emi said to herself without thinking.

Suzuno and Urushihara sat silently in Unit 202 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

The unit was furnished with a dresser made from cherry wood that gave an old-fashioned atmosphere, along with a charmingly old-fashioned, circular dining table and a brand-new paulownia dresser.

The furniture was all in the traditional Japanese style, but the refrigerator was a new, energysaving, family-size model, and the washer that sat in the public hallway was a large drum that could even perform air iron disinfection drying. But perhaps because of the limited power, the microwave did not differ much from the simple model Demon King Castle had.

The fan was the newest Tyson model with an ellipsoidal shape, and it mysteriously blew air from its side without any fan blades. Urushihara curiously stuck his hand in and out of the side of the fan.

“...Nothing seems to have happened.”

And then, Ashiya walked through the door.

“You were able to see Chiho-dono home?”

“Of course. She was worried for my lord and the rest of us all the way home.”

“However, we cannot let Chiho-dono become involved in this matter.”

“Of course. If something were to happen to Sasaki-san, our livelihood would be in danger. No matter what happens, I instructed her not to approach Demon King Castle until everything is settled.”

“...Well, I do agree with your judgement.”

Suzuno had not asked the question with that type of answer in mind, but let Ashiya inside without objecting.

Ashiya lazily sat down in the middle of the room, and Suzuno asked him yet another question.

“Alciel, let me ask you something.”

“What? I’m not paying for lodging.”

“Do you take me for a cheapskate? I am not like you. I was going to ask about your demon army.”

Suzuno raised her head above her knees that she had her arms wrapped around.

“Why did you plot to conquer the world?” asked Suzuno to two lowermiddle-class men of the type that could be found anywhere in Japan.

“I thought I understood everything, but now I cannot say I understand why you wanted to take over the world.”

“...That refrigerator is wonderful, isn’t it?”

“Huh?”

Ashiya’s response seemed to have come out of nowhere.

However, Ashiya said so with the most serious expression while looking at the newest energysaving model refrigerator that Suzuno had purchased a few days before at Emi’s recommendation.

“If you open the door to that refrigerator, vegetables, meats, and milk that were purchased yesterday can be found. If you were lacking anything, you could just go to the store and buy anything and cook whatever food you wanted for any particular day... perhaps my lord and the rest of us dreamed of something like that and began the invasion of Ente Isla.”

“...?”

“If you don’t understand, that’s fine. Either way, we work diligently now for the future we will have when we return to Ente Isla... do you get that, Urushihara?”

“...I’ll um, work when I can work.”

“You scum.”

Perhaps because of situation at hand, Ashiya and Urushihara’s verbal exchanges were relatively peaceful.

Suzuno listened to the two of them talk, and slowly put her face into her knees again. \*\*\*

“...Uh...”

Because of the combination of the early sunrise and increasing temperature, Emi woke up. She opened her eyes slowly and saw wooden boarding on the ceiling that she was not accustomed to. “...!! Uh oh...”

Emi nearly jumped up as she had just remembered that she had stayed overnight at Demon King Castle.

“...That was close.”

She noticed that Alas Ramus was clinging onto her and sleeping peacefully. If she had jumped up as she almost did, she also would have woken up Alas Ramus.

Emi sighed in relief and rotated just her head to look at Maou on the other side of Alas Ramus.

His sleeping posture was incredibly disgraceful.

The room was certainly hot, but he even had rolled up his shirt, exposing his stomach, and was snoring loudly with his mouth wide open. It would not have been surprising if he started making bubbles with his nose.

Emi looked at the clock, which showed five-thirty. It was the time of the year when the sun rose early.

Since she had slept on a tatami with just a sheet, her entire body was stiff. Emi started trying to loosen her neck and shoulders, and yawned loudly as she thought she should make Maou at least buy a futon for Alas Ramus.

Not a sound could be heard from Suzuno’s room next door. Perhaps they were still sleeping. Emi began wondering if Chiho has been able to get home safely.

Emi stroked Alas Ramus’s hair, then reached for her bag, took out a bottle of Holy Vitamin Beta, and drank it in one gulp.

Since she didn't know when Gabriel would be arriving, she decided that it would be best for her to recharge her energy as much as possible in case a fight broke out.

Of course, it was all for protecting Alas Ramus and not because she was falling for the demon king's tricks.

“It's all for Alas Ramus, it's all for Alas Ramus.”

Emi mumbled, and frowned at the aftertaste of the vitamin drink in her mouth.

“I should wash my face,” muttered Emi as she turned towards the kitchen sink, and then,

“Yo, morning!”

Until that precise moment, she had had no idea that someone besides Maou and Alas Ramus was in the room.

“...Ngh!!!!”

The man was hiding in the blind spot beyond Emi's field of vision. He then placed his hand over Emi's mouth before she had a chance to react.

“Don't struggleee, I won't do anything rooough.”

“Mgh, ngnggh!”

Emi tried to kick Maou with her foot, but he was just outside her reach.

“It's uuuseless. Eeeeveryone is deep asleep. They won't wake up for a whiile.”

Emi glared at the source of the happy-toned voice while still being muffled, and concentrated her will on her right hand without hesitation.

“Whoa, that's dangerous.”

The man removed his hand from her mouth surprisingly easily and backed off some distance.

However, since they were in a six-tatami apartment unit, said distance was no more than the width of two tatamis, which was still easily within reach of Emi's holy sword.

"Angels nowadays really have no manners, do they? Kidnapping people, putting transmitters in people's bags, breaking into people's homes..." The man who did not show a hint of angelic holiness laughed proudly.

"Yeeeah, but don't you think it's okay if it's Demon King Castle? It's basically a villain's base..."

"And why are you here so early? Is it because you changed your mind and decided to take her by force after all?"

Emi extended her right hand to Gabriel's throat.

In a blink of an eye, the Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half, appeared in Emi's right hand, the tip of its blade pointed to the archangel's throat.

"Hey, didn't I say yesterday that I just wanted to talk? You look like you don't want to hear anything I have to say."

"Alas Ramus aside, you want my holy sword too, don't you? I can't go easy on you if you plan on interfering with achieving my goal."

"Geez, what a paain, all the girls nowadays have such strong personalities. No wonder boys without a shred of manhood are everywhere now. Girls these days are scary."

Perhaps because it was his personality, or perhaps because of his confidence as an archangel, but Gabriel did not show any change in attitude even while the holy sword was pointed at his throat.

“Ooh, by the way, let me at least make this clear. The reason the demon king and the people next door aren’t going to wake up isn’t because I used some power or put up some barrier or anything like that.”

“...What are you saying?”

“Well, it’s just my guess, but they probably haven’t gotten much sleep recently. They looked like they did their best trying to stay up and stand guard, but they all passed out just one hour ago. Seriously, even you didn’t wake up at aaall. I came into this room, used the microwave to heat up the food I bought from the corner store, used the bathroom, and did some radio exercising in the yard, but no one woke up. I was actually starting to get lonely.”

“...”

Emi remembered Maou saying something about working until midnight, but being forced awake by Alas Ramus early in the morning the previous day.

“So, since I try to be the most gentlemanlike being in the universe, I wasn’t going to attack someone in their sleep. So that’s why I waited aaaall this time for you or the demon king to wake up so we could try to have another discussion... so, let’s put away our sharp objects, okay?”

Gabriel tried to curry favor with Emi by making an innocent expression and attempted to move the point of the sword away from him, but Emi refused to budge her sword.

She didn’t want any more alternate world beings becoming infatuated with worldly desires such as eating corner store food or doing radio exercises.

“Unlike Sariel, I don’t have a technique that nullifies holy powers, so seriously, can we please do this peacefully?”

“...Yeah, right.”

“Huh?”

“I bet your henchmen have the apartment surrounded, don’t they? Are they what you call heavenly soldiers?”

Gabriel became flustered at Emi’s aggressive questioning.

“I just want what I came for, and I seriously don’t want to hurt anyone, but what was I supposed to do? The demon king wouldn’t back down yesterday, so I have them on the lookout from a distance. Oh, but I take up a lot of the Gate’s capacity, so the rest of them aren’t really strong. Besides, when I take that girl back, it’ll eat up even more of the capacity. So, pweeease, will you listen to me?”

“...”

“Whaaaa!? Did you seriously sink the tip of your sword into my neck!? Aren’t you supposed to be the hero? You’re too good at threatening people with a sword! Scary!!”

Emi had silently thrusted the tip of her sword further, and it had touched Gabriel’s neck. He wasn’t hurt, but he acted flustered.

And because they were causing such a commotion,

“...Man, what are you being so loud...? Geez, it’s only five-something, what... the hell!?”

Even if he had been lacking sleep recently, it wasn’t surprising that all the shouting right next to him had woken him up.

When he opened his eyes, he saw Emi and an unfamiliar man, with the holy sword between them, fighting in a extremely confined, six-tatami room.

“uiiuh... daddy?”

Alas Ramus had also woken up. Maou couldn't think clearly at such a sudden turn of events.

“Gabriel... why the hell are you here so early...?”

“Oh, Demon King Satan, ‘morning. Sorry to intrude so early. Weell, I have a schedule to keep myself, you seee.”

Maou shielded Alas Ramus with his body for the time being, but with Gabriel having been able to get so close undetected and almost no reserve power himself, the situation was hopeless.

“Se-see, you shouldn't use a sharp object in front of a child. It's not a good influence, so can you pleeeease put it away?”

Gabriel still tried to get them to do what was convenient for him.

However, there was no way she could trust what he had said. There was no guarantee that he wouldn't attack the moment the holy sword was resealed.

The fact that Gabriel had come himself, even with the weaker Heavenly soldiers, meant that he was just that confident in himself. An angel with the name Gabriel couldn't possibly be the simpleton that he portrayed himself to be.

“I don't want to make enemies with Heaven or angels either. But you're the one forcing me to take an aggressive stance.”

“Whaa... that's scaaary logic.”

Gabriel cowered as if he were despairing for the world.

“Then I'll just talk like this... the tip is touching my throat, scaaary... well, if I had to concede something, I just need either the holy sword or the little child for now. I'm not going to lie to you, you have two choices. Give, or don't give.”

Gabriel calmly but annoyedly explained as he waved his raised arms around.

“The Yesod Sefirah that I guarded was stolen from the Tree of Life, the foundation of the world, a long time ago. And the thief even had the guts to split the Yesod Sefirah into many fragments and scatter them all over the place. Your Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half, and the little child behind the demon king all came from Yesod fragments, Emilia. So it’s not good for them to be outside Heaven for an extended period of time.”

“My holy sword... came from a Yesod fragment?”

Gabriel stuck his index finger out and spoke as plainly as if delivering the morning news.

“Yeep. Here, see, it’s embedded right there. A violet crystal.”

Gabriel pointed to the holy sword’s handle with just his finger and eyes.

The Evolving Holy Sword Better Half’s handle had carvings of wings, and in the center of them was a violet jewel ornament. However, Emi had assumed long ago that it was nothing more a decoration.

“The ‘Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half’ is pretty dangerous, even compared to the other stuff. It was pretty high on our priorities to recover it, but until you invaded Ente Isla, Satan, its whereabouts were a mystery for a loooooooong time. We’ve spent hundreds of years recovering the fragments little by little, but we just couldn’t find the holy sword and the little girl. And I didn’t want others to know about my failure, so I’ve been recovering them by myself secretly, but you can’t hide something like that for so long. I was accused of rebelling against God, and Sariel found out about what happened to me. I almost became a fallen angel, haha!”

Gabriel laughed at what he was saying, which didn’t match the tense atmosphere.

“How is it dangerous? The holy sword is an object for defeating the demon king, and shouldn’t pose any danger to anyone.” “It poses a danger to me, though.”

Maou’s joke was ignored.

“Well, that’s what you humans... I mean, that’s just the story told by the Church that obtained the Yesod fragment long ago. And if I tell you why it’s dangerous, that’ll ruin all the effort I put into chasing after the fragment. Can’t tell ya!”

“What... a story...?”

“Besides, why would there just happen to be a convenient weapon that works well against the demon king or the demons? ‘The ‘Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half’ derives its strength from holy power, right? How is it different from those people from the Church who use ‘Materialization War Art, Iron Light?’ They’re just made from different materials, so the holy sword isn’t a weapon made specifically to find demons.”

“But... but, the holy sword led us to where the demon king was...”

When they had infiltrated the demon king’s castle, the holy sword had led Emi and the others straight to where the demon king was with its light. That was the reason why they had been able to take the castle in such a short time.

“It probably wasn’t leading you to the demon king, but to that girl,” Gabriel said plainly.

“The Yesod fragments just attracted each other, that’s all. Well because of that, finding that little child took longer though.”

The events that ensued after the fragments attracted each other was the great battle between the demon king and the hero, in which she had drawn out all the power she could from the holy sword.

“Because of the strong signal that the holy sword was giving off, the signal from the child that was already weak to begin with was overpowered. And then, Emilia coming over to this world erased the signal altogether, and we didn’t know which way it went and we just panicked. Who would have guessed that it became part of demon king’s gardening hobby?”

The last time Maou had seen the tree that was born from the crystal, its two branches had just began to twist into each other, there were no flowers or fruits, let alone trees yet.

Regardless, he had never expected the crystal to do anything to begin with, and he had completely forgotten about it until very recently. And just when Maou had began thinking that it was a bit of a miracle that it was able to even grow,

Gabriel suddenly grabbed the holy sword with his bare hands.

Emi was caught completely off guard and tried to pull the sword back, but it would not budge.

“It’s useleeeess. It might hurt a bit like a paper cut, but the holy sword in its current state wouldn’t be able to defeat me unless something really off the wall happened. Soooo...”

Gabriel turned his eyes to Maou, still with a carefree attitude.

“Do you get everything now? Please, will you listen to me without throwing a fight?”

This was the final warning.

Gabriel’s actions were to show that even if Emi had attempted to fight, the outcome would be clear. Maou did not even have any reserve power stored in himself and nothing he could do would help.

Even if they had help from Suzuno, the outcome would most likely not be any different.

If that was the case, Maou was only left with one choice.

Maou took a deep breath and turned to Gabriel.

Emi and Gabriel nervously wondered if Maou was going to try some desperation attack, but,

“...what?”

“Wha-what do you think you’re doing!?”

Maou’s action was not expected by Gabriel or Emi.

“Please,”

Maou knelt down on the floor.

The Demon King Satan, who stood in the pinnacle of the demon world and held aspiration to conquer the world had lowered his head to an archangel.

“Please don’t take Alas Ramus away.”

Maou earnestly pleaded, with his forehead on the tatami.

“daddy...?”

Alas Ramus did not understand what Maou was doing, and looked back and forth between him and Gabriel.

“You know, I’m an angel and you’re the demon king. I can’t do what I did with the girl yesterday.” Gabriel replied with a tired tone, but Maou had expected such an answer.

“Of course, I’m not asking you to back off for free. How about my head in exchange? Not a bad deal, right?”

“What!?”

“Wh-what!? Don’t be stupid!?”

The two of them were completely dumbfounded.

“I-I’m going to be the one to defeat you! Don’t toss your life away in a place like this!”

“Oh, shut up. Just tell them you had the guidance of an archangel and defeated me or something. What do you have to lose?”

“Everything!! Who’d take guidance from people like them!? It’s pointless unless I do it myself!”

“I couldn’t care less about what’s important to you! What’s important now is Alas Ramus!”

“Uuum, hey, can you not have a family fight while ignoring me?”

““Who are you calling a family!?”” said Maou and Emi simultaneously.

“Wow... You two practically finish each other’s sentences...”

Said Gabriel, somewhat impressed.

“daddy mommy no fightiiing!!”

In an rare occasion, Gabriel and Alas Ramus’s opinions coincided.

“Let me ask you something then. Why does a demon king such as yourself care so much about that child? Didn’t you forget about her existence until very recently?”

“It’s because I became blind with my greed after becoming a King like ‘that demon,’ and forgot what was really precious to me!”

That day when he was caught in the claws that came down on him, and saw the red sky and ground as he saw death.

“She’s a symbol of my hope that I obtained when I was saved from the brink of death and was reborn... but I somehow forgot that and became a ‘king of demons.’ “

Sadao Maou, who also was the worthless demon Satan, slowly embraced Alas Ramus.

“daddy... you hurtin’ me a wittle.”

Alas Ramus wiggled in Maou’s arms.

“Nothing happened even when you didn’t know where she was for hundreds of years, right? Please, in exchange for my life, don’t take her to where she doesn’t want to go.”

“...you make it sound like me taking that child back is the most terrible atrocity in the world, but

I’m going to say it again, she’s originally a Yesod fragment so she belongs in heaven...”

“I know about the legends of ‘The ancient great demon king Satan!’ “

Emi saw Gabriel’s face stiffen as soon as Maou had said that.

“The ancient great demon king Satan” most likely referred to the demon king from long ago that Maou had mentioned last night, but how that was related to Gabriel was unclear. “...so please, I can’t let her go. I don’t want her to go. Please. For now, let her...!!”

Maou could not finish his sentence, and fell on his knees.

“Sorry, but change of plans.”

“Gah...hng...”

Maou struggled as he was on his knees. Emi could not tell what exactly was happening, but he seem to be struggling to breathe.

“Well, I wasn’t going to do this, but you know, you just dug your own grave. Even for a gentle soul like me, I have to do it after hearing what you just said.”

“Gaaaaaaah!!!”

“De-demon king!?”

Gabriel drew close to his face as if he was making a point. At that precise moment, even Emi’s eyes saw that Maou’s neck was beginning to be dented in, as if an invisible hand was choking him.

“My lord! My lord, what’s going on!?”

“Step back, Alciel, I’ll smash through with my hammer!”

Suddenly, the hallway outside became filled with commotion, and Ashiya and Suzuno’s panicstricken voices could be heard.

“Oooh, I guess if we make this much noise, they’d wake up. But it’s uuuseless. That barrier won’t be broken by just tapping it here and thereee.”

Gabriel was not fazed in the slightest. A sound of a heavy object smashing on the door could be heard, but the sixty-year old apartment’s door did not even crack.

And even at a time like this, Urushihara’s voice could not be heard. He was most likely still sleeping by himself.

“Hero Emilia, sorry, but I’m going to put an end to demon king satan for good. I know you have your issues, but like he said earlier, can you tell the church something like being guided by an archangel or whatever it was? I’ll even make some people see dreams and oracles about it.” The situation was completely hopeless.

The demons without their powers could not do anything, and the holy sword was neutralized.

“‘kay, Emilia? Sound good?”

Gabriel asked Emi while still not taking his eyes off of Maou. He still had the carefree tone as if he was asking for directions. It was reflective of how little he looked to the human world. “...I refuse.”

“Huh?”

“It’s my turn to tell her bedtime story tonight. If you take her away, I’d be breaking my promise.”

“Whaat... seriously...?”

Gabriel’s words suggested that he was disappointed, but his tone suggested that he wasn’t concerned.

Emi’s aggravation grew further.

“I couldn’t care less about what situations you high and mighty beings are in!  
The Demon King

Satan will be cut down by my hands! No one else is going to take that from me!!”

“Uuuuh... I don’t know about that line that you’ve used to death...”

“To begin with, someone who tries to separate a daughter from her father forcibly can’t possibly be a good person! Heavenly Light Flame Strike!!”

“Huh? Wha, wha-hot hot hot! Hot! Hot! Hey! What do you think you’re doing!?”

Emi emitted fire from the blade of her holy sword.

The technique had cut open the fallen angel Lucifer, but it did not burn Gabriel’s palms.

“It-it doesn’t look like much, but it was actually really hot! Geez! I already said I don’t want to be rough with you, why can’t you understand it? Didn’t I say I was in charge of her?”

“I didn’t ask you to!”

“Well, yeah, but it’s my duty...”

“...”

“Gah...ngah...”

“Who... was that?”

Even Gabriel, who had been talking lazily until now grew serious.

“all we were doin’ was playing.”

The voice came from near Emi, Gabriel, and Maou’s feet.

“malkoo said so. you are liars.”

Tiny feet and tiny hands. Cute but with strong determination in her eyes.

“you all lied to become gods!”

Alas Ramus gently touched the struggling Maou. With just that,

“Gah!! Cough!... gaaaaah...”

“Whaaaat!?”

Gabriel’s grip was loosened and Maou regained his breathing while in cold sweat. “i, hate you all!”

“Whaaa...”

Alas Ramus took a step towards Gabriel.

“you separated us, you locked us, and,”

In that moment, a violet crescent mark appeared on Alas Ramus's forehead, and the yellow dress she had been wearing began shining like the summer sun.

“i wont forgive anyone who pick on mommy and daddy!!!!”

“Nwah!”

“Kyaah!!”

Gabriel was blown away by the golden light and slammed against the wall of Demon King Castle.

With that, the holy sword was freed from Gabriel's hands and Emi regained her freedom.

“Alas...”

“wait daddy!”

“Wa-wait!!”

From beside Maou, who was still unable to stand up, Alas Ramus, cloaked in the golden aura, flew into Gabriel's chest like a cannonball.

“Gweeeeh!”

Gabriel was blown through the wall by Alas Ramus while letting out a cry that sounded like a frog being smashed with a brick.

“A-Alas Ramus! Heavenly Light Swift Step!!”

Emi ignored Maou, activated her speed-boosting technique by concentrating her power into her evil-slaying garment, and chased after them.

“Emilia!”

“My lord!!”

Since the barrier seemed to have dissolved with the Gabriel's disappearance, the door was suddenly blasted off its hinges and Suzuno and Ashiya rushed into the apartment.

Seeing the immobilized Maou and the great hole in the wall, Ashiya's face erupted with fury.

“H-h-h-h-how dare you, Emilia! How are you capable of such atrocity!?”

Ashiya's thought process of making a judgment just based on what he saw was understandable. However,

“No... Gabriel... Alas Ramus is...”

“What!? He has come already!?”

“Alas Ramus... is fighting... hurry... go after... cough!”

“Alas Ramus...”

“Is fighting?”

Ashiya and Suzuno couldn't understand what Maou was trying to say, and could only look back and forth between the wall and Maou.

“Suzuno, please... take me... up to...”

Suzuno saw Maou struggling to speak, and nodded. However,

“Stop, human! Demon King Satan!!”

“We will not allow you to interfere with Lord Gabriel!!”

Suddenly, Gabriel's four subordinates from the previous day flew down and blocked the hole that Alas Ramus had blasted open.

Even the Heavenly soldiers had white wings on their backs.

“Ugh... you bastards...”

Even if they wanted to fight, Suzuno was the only one able to. No matter how weak Gabriel considered them to be, fighting four-on-one against Heavenly soldiers was not a desirable position. However,

“Huh? Who do you think you’re talking to?”

The expressions of the four angels suddenly became stiff.

“You pawns of Gabriel think you can dare to tell me to back down? Hm?”

“U-Urushihara?”

Urushihara had the appearance of just having woken up, and lazily leaned against the doorway, glaring at the four angels. And then,

“Step aside.”

Two simple words. However,

“...”

The four angels moved out of the way without resistance.

“Maou, Bell, it’s okay. I won’t let them get in your way, so go.”

“Wha-what’s going on?”

“Ashiya, did you forget what kind of demon I am?”

Urushihara clicked his tongue with an annoyed expression.

Lucifer was an archdemon general of the demon king’s army. However, before he became the fallen angel told of in countless sacred texts and legends, he was also called the Morning Star, and was Heaven’s highestranked angel who had tried to become God.

“Before my fall, I was the head of the archangels. I won’t be able to do something like this with Gabriel himself, but his small fry soldier pawns can’t oppose me.”

Heaven's customs dictated that angels could not disobey a higher-ranked angel, even a fallen one.

However, contrary to his name, the Morning Star woke up in the evening and went to sleep at sunrise on multiple occasions, and his sleep cycle was in complete disarray. One might even feel sorry for the hard-working angelic soldiers who couldn't disobey the hardly working fallen angel because of a rigid law.

“You... really are useful sometimes...”

“The ‘sometimes’ was unnecessary, Maou. Just hurry up and go already.”

“Ye-yeah. Suzuno, I’m counting on you!”

“Very well. Get on the head of the hammer! Do not be thrown off!”

Suzuno and Maou flew into the early morning sky, through the path opened by the angels.

“Alas Ramus!?”

Emi looked up into the sky above Sasazuka.

There, she saw Alas Ramus charging like a comet with a conscience and Gabriel on the defensive.

“Ow, ow ow ow ow!”

“Gabriel! Get away from Alas Ramus!”

“Wha-what do you think I’m trying to dooooo!?”

Gabriel was distracted by Emi's voice, and Alas Ramus headbutted him with all her power.

After a cringing clash, Gabriel was sent flying into the air like a bottle rocket.

“Alas Ramus! Are you okay!?”

Emi ignored Gabriel flying down toward her and holding his nose, and grabbed Alas Ramus into a hug in mid-air.

“What are you, bliind!? No matter how you look at it, I’m the one being hurt!”

Voicing his complaint loudly, Gabriel braked suddenly by stretching his great wings.

“Geez! I’m not that good at fighting!”

Gabriel took his empty right hand and made a fist in front of his face. Then,

“Tadaa! My sword’s bigger now!!”

Emi had no idea who he was trying to imitate, but yelled back at Gabriel, who now held a dangerous object in his hand.

“You’re going to use a sword against a little kid!?”

“Hey! Would a beast tamer in a circus fight back against a rampaging bear or lion with his bare hands!? Just because I’m her guardian doesn’t mean I can always take her lightly!”

“Sa-say that again, I dare you! How dare you compare Alas Ramus to a bear or a lion!!!”

“I just wanted to make an example that would be easy for you to understand! Why are you acting like an upset motheer!?”

“mommy careful! zat swood is weally strong!”

Alas Ramus stood between Gabriel and Emi to protect her.

“Yep, it’s strooong. If you put it another way, I was so scared just now that I had to resort to pulling this out.”

His confident manner of talking still didn’t change, but it didn’t take Alas Ramus’s warning for Emi to see that his longsword was anything but ordinary.

“The sword of Gabriel... Durandal, right?”

“Exactamundo! This sword doesn’t have any special power imbued in it, but it’s incredibly tough and can cut through anything. It’ll slice anything you throw at it in half, including your ‘Evolving Holy Sword Better Half,’ probably. I’m the guardian, so I can’t lose to just a fragment. Even if she’s actually a Yesod fragment, it wouldn’t make me feel good to cut down a little child, so I’d rather you surrender.”

“...Do you really think we’ll surrender because you asked us to? Villains usually get defeated when they get confident...”

At that exact instant, a gentle wind blew past Emi, and she felt a slight impact to her right hand.

“Nooo, if I act like a gentleman, I actually end up breaking the flag.”

Gabriel’s voice came from behind her.

“!!”

Suddenly, Emi felt her holy power draining rapidly.

She then realized that the blade of the holy sword had been broken in half. To be more precise, the top half was cut off.

The piece of the sword flickered in the air like a firefly. The edge of the sword that had been cut off shone like a mirror. Once Emi realized Gabriel had cut her blade off, she couldn't even move.

“mommy!!”

Alas Ramus had the same reaction, and began flying towards Emi. Emi realized what would happen to Alas Ramus, whose only way of attacking was tackling, if she were to come to contact with Durandal's blade.

“It'll be fine as long as it still has the Yesod fragment, the evolving heavenly silver core. But I couldn't care less about what happens to your holy sword either way.”

Gabriel then tried to strike a pose, and placed Durandal on his shoulder.

“Ow! I cut my shoulder!”

He placed his sword that could cut anything on his shoulder, which caused the sword to cut his clothes and shoulder. “Hey, Alas Ramus,”

“...what mommy?”

Emi ignored Gabriel for the time being, and asked Alas Ramus a question.

“...Do you love your ‘daddy?’ Do you always want to be with him?”

“yah!”

Alas Ramus gave a definitive answer.

“oh, but i love you too mommy. i want to be wis you too,” she added afterwards in a hurry, which made her all the more adorable.

“Okay.”

Emi grinned.

“Then I can't abandon a little girl that wants to be with her beloved daddy.”

Emi concentrated her will on the holy sword and poured her holy power into it.

The broken blade began repairing itself, and returned to its original appearance.

It was thinner and seemed less dependable than it was when she had first drew it. However,

“I’ll do whatever it takes to bring happiness to those whom I’ve been entrusted to protect!”

“Uuugh... I feel like this is going to be really troublesome...”

Emi poured all her willpower into her action, while Gabriel frowned from the bottom of his heart.

“...Don’t hold it against me. Man, you make me sound like such a villain.”

Gabriel took a stance that showed complete and utter disregard to swordwielding techniques. However, judging from his speed and the power and the sharpness of the sword, she would lose her life if she got even nicked.

“Like I said, if you get in my way, I won’t have any choice but to fight back seriously. Think about what you’re trying to do.”

“Compared to seeing a little child cry, fear of my enemies is nothing!”

“That child might look like a child, but she’s actually a Yesod Sefirah originally... Geez, stop making me sound like a villain!”

Emi no longer cared about Gabriel’s complaints, and began strategizing for the desperate battle.

Even in its optimal form, the sword had been snapped in half. She could not parry his sword with hers. She would have to cut down Gabriel in one strike. However, his speed made that nearly impossible.

“Aaaaaaaaaah!!”

In that moment, someone attacked Gabriel from his back at high speed.

“De-demon King!?”

“daddy!”

“Nngh!”

Maou flew into the sky on the head of Suzuno’s hammer, and somehow managed to land on Gabriel’s back.

As Maou jumped onto Gabriel, Suzuno swung her hammer at Gabriel at the same time.

“War Light Shockwave!!”

The shockwave that came out as Suzuno screamed hit Gabriel right in his behind as he tried and failed to dodge the hammer with Maou on his back.

“Whooooooooaa!?”

“Whaaaaaaaaa!!”

Because his center of gravity was closer to the top of his body due to Maou, Gabriel began rapidly spinning in the air.

“LET GOOOOOOOO!”

“LIKE HELL I WILLLLLLL!!”

In the midst of the rapid spinning, the fight between an archangel and the demon king seemed to last forever.

“Eeemiiii! Do it noooow! Cut him down along with meeeeeee!!” Emi snapped back after hearing Maou’s desperate scream.

“Yo-you idiot!! How can I do that in front of Alas Ramus!?”

“Iidiooooot!! This iiiis our only chaaaance!”

“Humph!”

“Gyah!”

Even Gabriel wouldn't keep spinning forever.

The moment he stopped, Gabriel cast Maou aside into the air with about as much effort as brushing off a fly.

“Daaaaahh!!”

Maou was sent spinning at an incredible speed yet again down to the ground.

“De-demon king!!”

Suzuno flew after him, but the distance and speed at which he fell were too much for her. “mommy.”

As Emi watched everything helplessly, Alas Ramus suddenly asked her a question.

“...What is it, Alas Ramus?”

“mommy, will you oohways be wis daddy? do you love daddy too?”

Emi didn't understand what she was asking and why now, of all times.

Even after having so many huge fights right in front of her. Even with their differences as the demon king and a human.

Emi could do nothing but smile at such a strange turn of events.

She wouldn't dream of hurting a little child. But she couldn't lie either.

“I... yeah, I'll always be with Daddy.”

“weally!?”

Alas Ramus smiled from the bottom of her heart, brimming with happiness.

Emi also answered with a smile.

“Yes, always.”

Emi then spoke words that were to be taken literally.

“Until death do us part.”

As long as Sadao Maou is Demon King Satan.

“yaaaay!!”

Alas Ramus let out a childlike shout of joy, and in that instant, “!?”

The impact was like an earthquake in space.

Suzuno was flying towards the falling Maou, but someone flew past her at such an incredible speed that she nearly lost control.

When she finally regained her position, Maou was mere moments from hitting the ground. However,

“daddy.”

Maou was floating just above the ground.

Somehow, he was enveloped in the golden light that surrounded Alas Ramus.

“Alas Ramus... you...”

“hey daddy, mommy said shell oohways be wis you.”

“Huh?”

Maou didn’t understand what she was saying at all, and tilted his head in confusion while he floated a few centimeters above the yard of Villa Rosa Sasazuka with his four limbs extended in an awkward position.

“so daddy, youll nevah be lonely right?”

“What are you saying...”

“im always with mommy and daddy, okay?”

“Huh?”

The carefree words and the immense light came out at nearly the same time.

The light that was soft as feathers filled Maou’s eyes in an instant.

“so byebye, for a wittle bit.”

Maou lost his support and fell to the ground as the golden comet flew high into the sky. Maou could do nothing as he watched from below.

Suzuno finally landed on the ground, but Maou didn’t even look at her, and screamed. “Alas Ramuuuuuuuuus!!”

As if answering Maou’s desperate scream, an explosion of silver light came from high above the skies, shining with the intensity of a second sun.

“It looks there’s a third choice, Gabriel,” said Emilia as she donned arm leg guards that shone with the brightness of a full moon.

On her right hand that held the holy sword was a simple arm guard that protruded slightly without touching the hand guard of the sword. On her empty left hand was a large, majestic arm guard with an attached shield. Her leg guards were of similar design.

Her evil-slaying garment, which normally only took the form of a glowing light surrounding her, had now physically manifested itself in various places.

The areas aside from her arm and leg guards were still enveloped in the veil of light from before. However, the “Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half” had completely returned to its original form, including the tip that had been cut off by Durandal, and was emitting a silver glow.

“Oh man... That’s right, the Church gave you more than one ‘Evolving Silver of Heaven.’ I completely forgot.”

Gabriel’s face grew serious as he took a stance with his Durandal once more.

“I can’t tell where the fragment that makes up the core of the evil-slaying garment is, but no wonder that child was drawn to you. This isn’t good, I didn’t expect it to evolve like that... I really have to get serio...!”



Even as Gabriel's expression showed his determination to fight, his carefree attitude had never changed. Something passed by him to his immediate right.

And in the next moment,

"Nggaaaah!!! What? What!? What is this!?"

A sharp pain ran through Gabriel's back, making him scream.

It was "pain" that he had never experienced before. It was a foreign concept to the archangel from Heaven who had almost never before been hurt by humans.

"Wha-wha-what...!?"

Gabriel's left arm was cut, albeit very, very shallowly.

However, this was an event completely unforeseen by Gabriel. Just moments ago, he had felt nothing as he gripped the holy sword's blade with his bare hands.

"...So angels' blood is as red as ours, huh."

Emi, Hero Emilia Justina, turned to face Gabriel once again after flicking off the drop of blood on the tip of Better Half.

"Leave, Gabriel. I don't have any intention of fighting against Heaven. I just don't want to see that little girl cry."

Emilia looked toward the ground as she spoke.

"I-I can't do that... I have my reasons for not being able to back down, too. How many centuries do you think I've been looking for that Yesod fragment?"

"Oh? So you're saying you still want to fight me with that sword?" "!!"

All traces of confidence disappeared from Gabriel's face.

The archangel's sword that was spoken of in the sacred texts, Durandal, had had its blade cut off, not unlike how Better Half had been damaged just moments ago.

As if to add insult to injury, a crack began to run down the middle of the blade from the open edge, and the sword crumbled to pieces like ashes.

"...I-I guess I really have to leave." Gabriel gave up surprisingly easily.

"But neither Sariel nor I have given up. We will obtain all the Yesod fragments someday. We're just letting you keep this one until then."

"You sound like a defeated dog. There's still one thing I don't understand, though. Just like the demon king asked, why are you so desperate to gather them all when nothing's happened, even though they were missing for hundreds of years?"

Gabriel made a short gaping expression at Emi's question.

"...Really? Are you really asking me that?"

"?"

Confused, Emilia glared at Gabriel.

"...You should think about what you are. And the meaning of the battle that you just fought against me. If you do that, you'll understand someday."

Gabriel gave a mysterious response, and suddenly thrust the broken Durandal into the air before Emilia could say anything further.

"I pray that when that time comes, you will choose to preserve the peace of the world. So that..."

Light began emitting from his hand.

“...we don’t repeat the tragedy of ‘The Great Demon King Satan.’”

“Wh-what!?”

The sky was filled with a great light, forcing Maou and Suzuno to turn away for a moment.

It could also be seen as an great explosion of light, but as they looked up to where the light had come from, they saw that it was something falling.

Suzuno kicked off of the ground and flew into the air, and began to close in on the falling object.

“E-Emilia!?”

Suzuno realized right away that it was a human, and in fact, Emilia.

She couldn’t discern whether Emilia was injured or merely unconscious because of the previous burst of light. Either way, Suzuno caught Emi just in time, as the hero fell limp into her arms. “Emilia! Are you alright!?”

Emi appeared to be incredibly feeble, but she opened her eyes as soon as Suzuno spoke to her.

“...Bell? ...Yeah, everything’s fine... or at least I am. And Gabriel is gone.”

“What!?”

Shocked, Suzuno quickly looked up into the light remaining from the explosion.

There, she saw only traces of the light, and the usual sky above Sasazuka. Not a single person was there, and certainly not Gabriel.

However, Suzuno was not relieved.

There was no one there.

Only Suzuno and Emi were in the sky.

“Hey, Emi!”

A voice from below called out to her, and even without looking, she could tell that it was a voice of desperation.

“Where’s Alas Ramus?”

“...”

“What happened to Alas Ramus!?”

“...”

Maou’s voice grew louder without him realizing it, as he looked up to the slowly descending Emi and Suzuno.

Emi looked away from him while making a grim expression, and a shiver ran through Maou’s spine.

“No... Did Gabriel...”

Emi did not give an answer.

And instead of a response,

“Uuuugh... what am I supposed to do...?”

Emi quietly moaned to herself in a voice no one else could hear.

\*\*\*

“Hey, Chii-chan,”

Chiho’s shift had just finished, and she had been stopped by Kisaki.

“Oh, Kisaki-san? Thanks for your hard work.”

“Yes, same to you. Can I talk to you for a second?”

“Of course. What is it?”

It was 9:00 PM. Chiho already had a good idea of what Kisaki wanted to talk to her about.

“Did that child go back to her relatives?”

Chiho’s guess was correct.

“You could tell, right?”

“He was... how should I put it... like an empty shell.”

They were talking about Maou.

Maou was absolutely lifeless. He made one simple, careless mistake after another, his voice had no energy, and his lack of diligence was so contrary to his usual self that Kisaki was actually worried.

“I suppose we have to wait for him to sort out his feelings by himself, but this isn’t good... Sorry, Chii-chan, but if he’s going to keep being like this, can you keep an eye on him and follow up if he makes any more mistakes?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Maybe I was too tough on him back then. I can’t be too soft on him all of a sudden, either.”

“It’s fine. Maou-san knows that you said all those things with his best interests in mind, Kisakisan. I’ll be leaving now. Excuse me.”

“Yeah, be careful on your way home.”

Chiho left the restaurant after thanking Kisaki, checked the time, and began heading towards Sasazuka Station.

Alas Ramus had disappeared.

Maou had seen Emi coming back by herself after chasing after Gabriel out of the apartment. He was absolutely devastated.

Chiho had only heard about the early morning battle with Gabriel from Suzuno.

What had been waiting for Chiho as she headed for Villa Rosa Sasazuka first thing in the morning was...

“Alas Ramus is... gone.”

Suzuno’s brief, shocking words.

Suzuno, Ashiya, and Urushihara sat on the stairs outside, seemingly at a loss, and there was a great hole in the wall of the second floor.

Chiho was already used to the supernatural events that the people of the alternate world invariably brought with them, and knew right away that it was the aftermath of a battle.

She did wonder briefly why no neighbors had noticed or reported this to the authorities, but that was the least of her concerns.

“A-Ashiya-san, what...”

“My lord is... safe. He is in Demon King Castle... but he has asked to be left alone.”

“What happened to... Alas Ramus-chan? What did that Gabriel person do!?”

Chiho quickly brought up Gabriel’s name,

“We don’t know. Emilia was completely out of it, just like Maou.”

Urushihara was the one to answer her.

“The most likely scenario is that Alas Ramus was taken by Gabriel.” “N-No!”

Chiho let out a heartbroken cry.

“This time, we were under the watch of the Heavenly soldiers, so there was no time or way for the demon king to regain his powers. I cannot imagine

Emilia being able to fight on even terms with the guardian of the Tree of Life... I suppose the silver lining is that neither Emilia nor the demon king were injured significantly... but sadly, she was most likely taken away."

"But maybe this was for the best? If Alas Ramus really was the Yesod Sefira fragment, then it's only natural that Gabriel would take her back to Heaven. I mean, we had no responsibility or obligation to take care of that kid in the first..."

"Urushihara-san!"

Chiho interrupted Urushihara with a shout before he could speak further.

"Just try saying another word, I dare you!"

"...What did I do?"

Urushihara pouted and sulked, but listened to Chiho anyway and shut his mouth.

"...What happened to Yusa-san?"

"Emilia has already returned home. She said she has work today as well... I understand that her belongings and clothes were tattered... but she's just a heartless witch..."

Ashiya replied with little energy.

"Sasaki-san, please go to your school. My lord..."

Ashiya looked up at the hole on the second floor wall with a grieved expression.

"...probably don't want to speak to anyone at the moment."

Chiho also couldn't help looking up at the hole, but at that moment, she felt an emotion she couldn't understand in her chest, and shed a tear.

"I-I'm sorry... I'll be leaving now."

Chiho tried to hide her tears by giving the three others a short bow, and left the apartment. “Alas Ramus-chan...”

Chiho muttered the little apple girl’s name as she headed for school, and shed another tear.

She had only been with her for a short time, but even Chiho felt a great sense of loss. She couldn’t imagine what it must feel like for Maou, whom Alas Ramus thought of as her beloved father.

In a time like this, Chiho could not even be next to Maou.

She despised her powerlessness from the bottom of her heart.

“...Oh, a text?”

Chiho felt her phone vibrate in her bag, wiped her tears away, and took it out.

“Yusa-san?”

The message was from Emi. She wanted to see Chiho sometime today, and any time was fine.

Chiho replied that she had work after school until evening, but if that was alright, then she could meet her. If the time didn’t matter to Emi, then there was no reason why she couldn’t meet her.

And now, Chiho found Emi next to the Sasazuka station on her way back from work.

“Yusa-saaan! Sorry! Did I make you wait?”

“Hey, Chiho-chan. Sorry for asking you to see me when you’re so tired.”

However, Emi seemed far more tired than Chiho was.

Chiho wondered if the loss of Alas Ramus was taking a toll on her in her own way.

“No, it’s fine... but is something wrong?”

“Um, well... It’ll be my treat, so can we talk inside that Eccentric Sihol over there? I see an open corner booth inside.”

“Huh? Oh, yes, that’s fine...”

They went inside the Eccentric Sihol in the mall next to Sasazuka Station, where Emi ordered a coffee and Chiho ordered a soy milk latte.

Emi took the corner booth where fewer people would pass by, sank deep into the cushions of the seats, and gave a great sigh.

“Did you hear about what happened this morning?”

Emi went straight to the point, and the topic of the conversation was unsurprising. Chiho nodded with a pained expression.

“...I stopped by their apartment.”

“I see...”

“Um... did Alas Ramus-chan get taken back, after all?”

“...”

Emi’s forehead formed even more ridges, with a frown far deeper than Chiho’s.

Chiho thought that her expression confirmed it.

“...If only I were stronger...”

“No, it’s not your fault, Yusa-san...”

“...If I’d had the strength to fight Gabriel on my own, this wouldn’t have had to happen.”

“Please, don’t blame yourself...”

“No, there’s no way around it. This is the result of my incompetence.”

“mommy, are yuu okay? does yur tummy hurt?”

“Yusa-san...”

“chii-neecha. is mommy hurt? is she hurt?”

“No, that’s not it. Her feelings are hurt... wait, what?”

“ou?”

Next to Emi and Chiho’s feet was...

“Whaaaaaaaaat!? !?”

Chiho tried to stand up on the spot, and hit her knee on the table, nearly flipping her soy milk latte over. “Ow!” She lost her balance and fell on the floor.

“chii-neecha! are yuu okay!?”

Her small, maple leaf-like hand patted Chiho’s face over and over again.

“Alas Ramus-chan!!”

Chiho yelled, while still on the floor with shock.

“Huh? But how!? Why? Why is Alas Ramus-chan here!?”

Chiho looked up, and saw Emi resting her head on the palm of her hand, looking away with an embarrassed blush.

“You’re okay! Oh, this is wonderful!!”

“wapu!”

Chiho shouted in joy, and hugged Alas Ramus tightly.

“Bu-but, why!? Maou-san, Suzuno-san, and Ashiya-san all think that Alas Ramus-chan was taken away, you know!?”

The unpleasant Urushihara was not important enough to be even mentioned in the conversation.

“...Even I didn’t think this would happen.”

Emi began explaining while still looking away.

At the moment Alas Ramus had emanated her dazzling light, Emi felt a strange sensation in her holy sword.

“Alas Ramus ate the holy sword.”

“...What?”

Alas Ramus, ate, the holy sword.

Chiho’s eyes widened, as she could not remotely understand how that set of subject, verb, and object could be used together in a sentence.

“She balled it up like this, like she was eating bread or something. Can you imagine my panic when she did that?” “...”

Chiho could not even find the words to reply.

“Well, that was apparently what you’d call a ‘fusion of Yesod fragments.’

Gabriel and I had no idea what happened, and just kind of froze in place for a while.”

“im oohways wis mommy!”

“And then, well, the Yesod fragments fused together, but the holy sword is part of my body as well, and what ended up happening is...”

Emi hid Alas Ramus with her body so that the rest of the cafe couldn’t see her, and put her hand on Alas Ramus’s forehead. And then,

“wabu!”

Alas Ramus lost her form and became a cloud of light.

A beautiful short sword had appeared in Emi's right hand in the brief moment Chiho blinked in shock.

The short sword, which seemed to be the holy sword, had a significantly different form from before. The violet orb embedded in it glowed even stronger than before.

Emi's right arm had a beautiful silver arm guard, and...

“mommyyy yuu scared me!”

The sword spoke.

“...It-it talked... wait, whaaat!? What!? Then, does that mean...”

“Yep.”

“chii-neecha, do i luk cool?”

“...Alas Ramus became part of the holy sword and evil slaying garment.”

Chiho could not close her gaping mouth.

“The-then why didn't you tell Maou-san and the others about this? Maou-san was completely lifeless today, and hasn't been able to work competently yesterday or today!”

“Oh, really? So he's suffering after all?”

“Of course he is! He adored her so much...”

“Heheh, sorry. But, I think this is good. For him, too.”

And then, the holy sword disappeared from Emi's right hand and Alas Ramus appeared in front of Chiho again.

“He has to learn the pain of losing something precious.”

Once the light that emanated from Alas Ramus's transformation faded, Emi patted her head gently.

“Gabrel went back crying, too. Well, even Sariel with his Wicked Eye Light of the Fallen couldn’t rip the holy sword out of me, so there’s nothing they can do. What the demon king and Bell saw was the light from the Gate that Gabriel opened as he ran back while making grade-school level comebacks... and anyway, here’s what I really need to talk to you about.”

“...Huh, o-okay, what is it?”

Chiho was still struggling to understand the situation, but Emi kept pressing forward with the conversation.

“Alas Ramus fused with the holy sword, but as you can see, she does have a certain degree of independence.”

“Yes.”

“And... this is something about what she’s been saying since before the fusion... but she seems to have the misunderstanding that I’m always with her ‘daddy’...”

Chiho let out a short cry after a brief moment of silence.

“What!?”

“She was throwing a huge fit inside my head all day long while I was at work. But if I were to leave her at Demon King Castle, I wouldn’t be able to use my holy sword if something were to happen.”

“What in the world?”

“And today of all days, Rika was completely out of it too, so I couldn’t ask her for advice, either.”

“Suzuki-san was out of it?”

“She was eyeing her phone nervously all day long. In the morning, lunch time, and even when she got off of work.”

Emi downed her now lukewarm coffee in one gulp and buried her face in her head while making a desperately troubled expression.

“Anyway, if this keeps up, I’m going to fail as a working lady and the hero! I have to defeat the demon king, but then that would mean Alas Ramus would have to kill her own ‘daddy,’ and to begin with, if she stays part of my holy sword and still has that misunderstanding, she’ll just keep clamoring in my head and drive me insane... I don’t know what to do anymoooore...”

“You’re having quite the maternity neurosis...”

The desperate complaints from the hero bearing the holy sword. Chiho’s head began to hurt. There was nothing Chiho could do for her.

There was nothing Chiho could do, but she would have loved to switch places with Emi.

“I don’t know if this would solve your problem, but...”

“What is it!?”

Chiho began to reply very calmly, while Emi eagerly listened to her.

“If you move to the empty unit at Maou-san’s apartment complex, at least Alas Ramus will get her wish.”

“I feel like I’d have lost if I do that, so absolutely not!”

“Don’t be such a child, Yusa-san!”

“Buuut....”

“move to daddys hooome!”

Alas Ramus, the little apple girl, continued to be blissfully unaware of the problems of the adult world and her mommy’s dilemmas.

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“That bonfire again?”

When Emi and Chiho arrived at Villa Rosa Sasazuka while the setting sun basked them in the last light of the evening, Maou was burning ogara next to the staircase of the apartment and staring idly into the smoke.

“Why don’t you study your Japanese culture a bit? It’s called a sending fire.”

“Sending fire? Okay... what purpose does it serve?”

“...It’s for sending ancestral spirits back to the other world after they come to this world with the welcoming fire. Traditionally, it’s done at the end of Obon, but I don’t think anyone’s going to have problems with me doing it a little early or a little late.

Maou let out a deep sigh.

Out of the corner of her eye, Emi saw that Maou was feebly holding onto the folding picture frame with the photo of the three of them together.

“Alas Ramus came with the welcoming fire, that’s why. But... in the end, that was wasted too. We never used it once.”

Maou looked at the yellow plastic child seat strapped onto Dullahan II, which reflected the white light of the setting summer sun.

A gentle summer evening breeze blew and scattered the smoke into the sky.

“I don’t want to talk to you. Go away.”

“I know. But I wanted to ask you something, so that’s why I’m here.

Now answer this.” “...”

Maou looked down annoyedly, but said nothing. Emi continued to talk.

“What did the traveler do with the charm he received from the angel after he became the king?” “...”

Maou groaned quietly, with his eyes still downcast.

“I want to use it as a reference. If there’s more to the setting, can you tell me?”

“So you just came to kick me while I’m down, is that it?”

“Yeah. Think of it as me coming to laugh at the demon king who’s depressed with all of his heart.”

“Really, you heroes and angels know no shame.”

“We know more than the demons.”

Chiho silently watched the scene unfold.

Maou did not react angrily, but began mumbling quietly after a brief period of silence.

“...The traveler forgot about the charm after he became the king. After he had become a worndown, desperate traveler like he’d before, the charm appeared in front of him again. He tried his best to treasure it this time, but maybe because his deeds as the king had been too evil, the charm was taken from him. Probably.”

“Hm, I see. But that traveler did eventually realize how precious it was to him.”

“...What are you getting at?”

Maou glared up at Emi, his eyes filled with aggression.

However, for some reason, unlike just a moment ago when she had been mocking Maou, Emi blushed slightly and avoided making eye contact with him.

“...What?”

Maou didn’t understand Emi’s attitude.

“So this time, you’ll treasure it. What do you think?”

“I think so, too.”

Chiho spoke for the first time.

“What are you two talking about...?”

Maou was thoroughly confused by Emi and Chiho’s mysterious actions.

“Well, I don’t know what exactly the traveler’s treasure was, but it was just that important to him, right?”

Emi extended her right hand, and a faint light began to glow.

“Do you now understand the pain of losing something precious? If you do, then treasure it this time.”

The little miracle materialized before Maou’s shocked eyes.

“daddyyyy!!”

Maou was absolutely stunned by the little girl who appeared to descend on the sending fire, and froze in place with his eyes wide open as if he were a pigeon that had just been shot by a peashooter.

“Alas... Ramus...? Wha... hey, what is...”

Maou staggered as he stood up and lost his grip on the photograph, which fell to the ground.

Alas Ramus, the girl who had supposedly been taken away, did not like what he had just done.

“daddy noooo! dun drop it, gwound is dertyyy!”

She picked up the photo quickly and held it against her chest.

“He-hey, is it, is it really you? Are you really Alas Ramus!?”

Maou knelt on the ground and patted Alas Ramus on the head, face, and shoulders while she continued to hold onto the picture.

“daddy noooo, it tikkos!”

The word “tickles” was too hard for Alas Ramus to say.

Alas Ramus laughed out loud like a little puppy, and grabbed Maou’s hand with one of her hands.

“...So that’s how it is.”

Emi’s words no longer reached Maou’s ears.

“I-I see, so you weren’t taken away...”

“I wanted to torment you a little longer. But Alas Ramus kept saying she wanted to see her daddy, and I didn’t want to stoop down to the same level as demons like you, so I had no choice but to take her here. You should be thanking... hey,”

Emi was spewing out excuses at a rapid pace, but she panicked upon seeing something completely unimaginable to her.

“Are you... crying?”

“Huh? What? Huh?”

Maou touched his face as he was asked the question, and found a streak of tears running down his face. He had never cried once since the day he almost lost his life long ago.

“Wh-why are you crying, aren’t you the demon king!? Are you an idiot!?”

Stop it!”

Emi was completely dismayed at Maou’s reaction, and had no idea how to react, so she ended up insulting him.

“daddy, das yor tummy hurt? tummy hurt!?”

Alas Ramus also noticed Maou’s tears, and looked up at Maou while she teared up herself.

“Um, this is that, yeah, it’s like, an accident or something, and...”

Maou, on the other hand, tried his best to hide his tears while making excuses.

“Maou-san, you’re happy, right? Because Alas Ramus-chan came back?”

Chiho’s smiling guess was right on the spot. “You do cry, right? When you’re really happy.”

Maou looked at Chiho absent-mindedly.

“Now you understand one more thing about the world, right?”

“chii-neecha, iz daddy okay? iz his tummy okay?” Alas Ramus asked with teary eyes, and Chiho patted her on the head.

“It’s okay. Your daddy is just happy to see you again, Alas Ramus-chan.” “I-I’m not crying!”

Suddenly, Maou angrily stood up and shouted.

“Wh-who’s crying!? I-I knew already! I-I’m her dad! I already knew that Gabriel and his angelic soldiers ran away!”

He tried to act tough, but it wouldn’t have fooled even a grade schooler.

“wabu!”

Maou picked up Alas Ramus somewhat roughly.

“I-I have Alas Ramus’s dinner ready, too! Hey! Ashiya, Suzuno! Dinner! It’s dinner time!”

He then ran up the stairs without putting out the bonfire that he had made as a sending fire.

“...I can’t believe he would go that far to act tough. But when he said dinner, does he mean he eats in that room?”

“I heard that for the time being, they go to Suzuno-san’s home for meals. They go back to their room for sleeping, though. He said something like, ‘It’s summer, so it’s cooler there.’”

“Sounds just like them.”

Emi gave a strained laugh, and looked up at the second floor of Villa Rosa Sasazuka.

Seeing Maou react in a way that was like his usual self, Emi couldn’t help but admit that some part of her felt relieved.

Her holy sword, Better Half, was still shrouded in mystery, and she had no idea how it was related to “The Great Demon King Satan” that Maou and Gabriel had mentioned.

Meanwhile, the clamoring voices of Ashiya and the others could already be heard from upstairs.

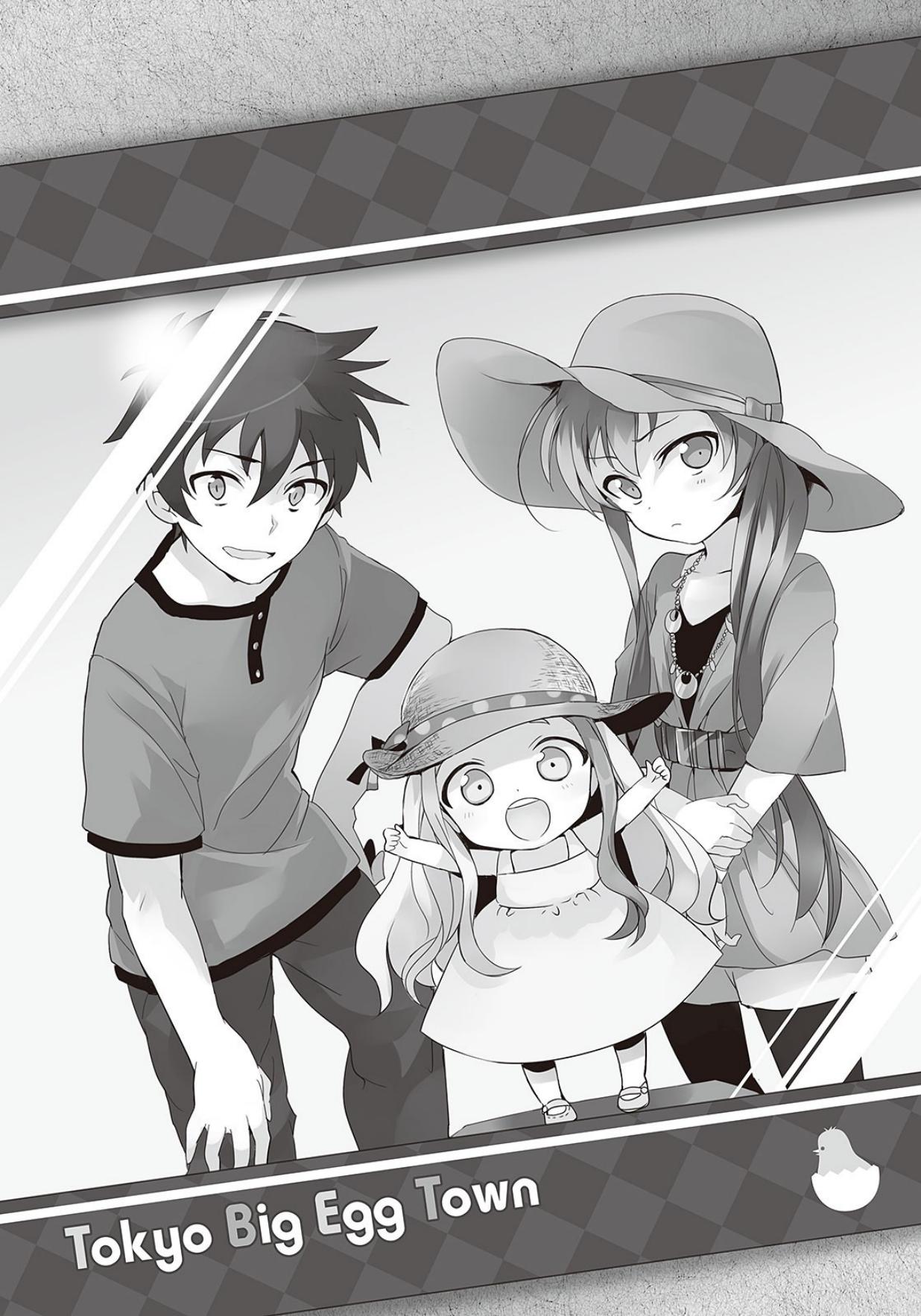
“But... how is it that this hasn’t been reported yet?”

“Come to think of it, yeah... I hear people look at it curiously from time to time, but the building is so old to begin with... If they contacted the police, that’d be nothing but trouble, but I think they’ll be fine.”

“You’re probably right. I’m the one who has to take care of Alas Ramus for the foreseeable future anyway, so I guess it’s not my problem.”

“mooooommyyyy! chii-neeeechaaa! dinnaaaah! dinnaaaaah!”

“Hey, Alas Ramus! That’s dangerous! You’ll fall like Mommy!”



Tokyo Big Egg Town



Alas Ramus called out to Emi and Chiho from the second floor on top of the staircase. Maou grabbed her from behind.

“Hey, eat with us. Suzuno cooked, so I promise we haven’t done anything to the food.”

“...What do you want to do?”

“I’ve been made a mother, so I should make sure she’s eating okay,” said Emi, as she carefully walked up the stairs.

Emi also sensed Chiho following her upstairs with a wry smile. She seemed to have seen right through Emi’s tough act.

She still had no idea what Gabriel’s parting words had meant. However, as the hero, she would do everything within her power to protect peaceful dinner times like this.

Or so she was able to think that, only in this moment.

\*\*\*

“That baby and Emilia’s holy sword fused!?”

“That’s right, that is exactly riiight! Seriously, this is the worst...”

“Sorry about that. But anyway, I was thinking about finally making a move on my goddess. What do you think?”

“Uuuugh, I was an idiot for thinking you’d be someone who’d listen to me, even if just for a little bit!”

“Don’t get so mad. But even my Wicked Eye of the Fallen was completely useless, so I can’t really help you.”

“You really are useless!”

“But isn’t the fusing of Yesod of ‘Alas Ramus’ and ‘Better Half’ really bad?”

“Isn’t that why I’m in a bind!? Isn’t that why I’m worried!? Isn’t that why I’m talking to you right now!? Hey, why can’t you feel a sense of urgency!? This isn’t the time to be daydreaming about some human woman! Geez! I shouldn’t have been so soft on that girl!”

“We’re both weak to women, aren’t we? I suddenly feel a strange connection with you.”

“Uh-oh, I wanna punch this guy!!”

“Don’t get so angry. Here, isn’t she beautiful? It’s a picture of when she got on the tray paper. I even sold it for five-thousand yen on Wahoo Auctions!”

“I’m punching!”

“Gah!!”

“I said, feel some urgency!!”

“How can you not see the pricelessness of this... geez... but anyway, Emilia didn’t fuse ‘Alas Ramus’ and ‘Better Half’ knowing what it would do, right?”

“No, she didn’t! So!?”

In the middle of the night, on the second floor of the now-closed Hatagaya Station Kentucky Fried Chicken, archangel Sariel spoke to the panic-stricken Gabriel while eating cold fries and chicken wings.

“Then if you seize the other ‘wing,’ then you’d at least avoid the worst-case scenario, right?”

“...Sure. But who would have the other one...?”

“Humph! A social recluse like you would never understand. Why don’t you try learning more about love between a man and a woman?”

“...”

“Don’t clench your fist in silence! You’ll understand if you just think calmly for a second!”

“Who!? I’ve no idea at all! And you act like you know everything, but has your love ever been returned, even once?”

“Fufu, everything until now was just mere practice for making my goddess mi... agh!!” Gabriel slapped Sariel without warning.

“You need to return the favor for all the times I’ve had to clean up after your messes!”

“O-okay! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I still have to do business tomorrow, so not in the face!”

“Business? Are you serious...? Think about the position you’re in. Sure, the recovery of the holy sword is a mission entrusted to me to make up for my failures, and its responsibility ultimately falls on me, but if others were to find out that the reason the mission is not complete is because you’ve fallen for a human woman, there’ll be trouble. Do you want to end up in the same situation as someone we know?” asked Gabriel annoyedly. Sariel, with a red cheek on one side, scoffed and answered,

“One must be prepared to make God or the entire world his enemy if he is to prevail in love!”

“I don’t know how serious you are... and? Who’s this person I would understand if I learned more about love between a man and a woman!?”

“Who took the Yesod Sefira to begin with? Once you just think about that, the rest is easy.”

Sariel smiled boldly, and continued,

“She left one of the wings to her daughter. Then it’s obvious where the other half is.”

Sariel waved the bone of the chicken wing he just ate, and said,  
“Nord Justina. Emilia’s father.”

## **Author, Afterword ----AND YOU----**

The ferris wheel gondola felt bigger than I expected when I rode it by myself.

I also had a picture of me by myself take, but when it came out, there was an old, unfamiliar geezer on it. “Who’s this guy?” I asked myself. Is this the author? I don’t even want to know.

If you ever ride a ferris wheel in a certain place in the city and see a mackerel wearing a pair of red glasses flipping around inside the gondola, that’s probably the residual spirit of the author. Let’s enjoy the journey into the sky together.

The main theme of this episode of the demon king and hero’s chaotic adventure is “childcare.” And because of that, I would like to make a note to the readers.

For this book’s research, I read many books on childcare, interviewed people who work with young children, and even took to the Internet and read people’s questions and answers.

And that was when I realized that different individuals and different generations vary greatly in what they think is the best way to raise a child.

People across different regions and generations all had differing opinions on what children should eat, what aid tools they should use, and what kind of medications they can or should take. I don’t know how much the opinion of a single male who would ride a ferris wheel by himself is worth, but I strongly felt that although some child caring methods might be better than others, there is no single best method.

Therefore, the scenes in this book that depicts childcare are just one of countless ways to raise a child.

Although I have my doubts about readers actually using this book as a childraising reference, if you have a young child, please make the proper and best judgments for your child on case-by-case basis, especially regarding what your child is to eat or drink.

Furthermore, a scene in this book discourages using sunscreen without a prescription from a drugstore, but that recommendation may not apply if a qualified pharmacist were to approve of using such a sunscreen.

And in some cases, first aid by an inexperienced individual may not be enough to treat a heat stroke.

For your child's sake, I would ask that you make decisions and judgments regarding medication usage and first aid on case-by-case basis.

The story this time is about guys who had no child-raising experience whatsoever desperately working hard, coming together and helping one another, and working hard yet again to live this new life.

The kindness of you readers and many individuals who worked hard is what made this book, Volume 3 of "Hataraku Maou-sama!" possible.

And luckily, I don't have to apologize this time for a character who shouts foul language.

Even though I've only been living this life as an author for three volumes, I've already received offers of having my work turned into comics, and I am simply in disbelief.

Nothing would make me happier than seeing the demon king and hero living frugal lives in the vibrant world of comics.

See you next volume.

はたらく魔王さま！3巻にして初のあとがきページなる場を  
いただきました。○29とかいておにくと申します。

帶にもありましたが、魔王さまついにコミカラーズです。

担当さんからお伺いした時はそれはもうびっくりで

同時にとても嬉しかったのを覚えております。

別の方の手でキャラクターに命が吹き込まれるなんて

楽しみで仕方ない…！！続報に期待です。

ところで新キャラもぞくぞく登場していますが、

大家さん一向に戻ってきませんね…！

今度和ヶ原さんに問い合わせてみようとおもいます。笑

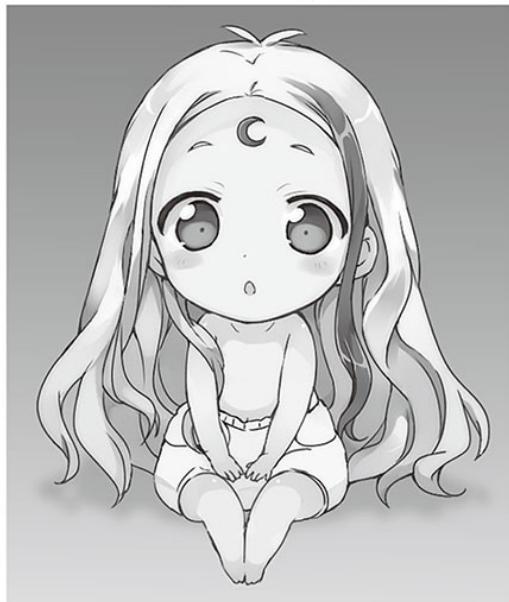
ではでは、また4巻でお会いしましょう。



『はたらく魔王さま! 3』  
巻末特別企画



履歴書 何をよ…… by 恵美 ↳ い、いや、流石にそこまでは by 真奥



ふりがな			
氏名	アラス・ラムス 代筆・真奥		
年↑月	日生(満)歳	性別	
ふりがな 真奥さん、一歳ちょっとくらい			
現住所 いつなんですか！ by 千穂			
東京都渋谷区笹塚X-X-X			
ヴィラ・ローザ笹塚 201号室			
代筆・真奥			
電話 子供用携帯電話を買ひ与えた方がよいのでしょうか by 芦屋			

年	月	学歴・職歴
		→ 目指せ東大！ by 真奥
		あがたが言うと夢が大きいのか小さいのか分からんわ by 恵美
10月とマス	を描	いたのかな by 千穂
↑いや、アレシ	エレとレシエレらしい	by 鈴乃
!? by 千穂		
別に	悔しくなんかない	by 真奥
言葉も聞	いてないわよ	by 恵美

資格	赤ん坊、皆のアイドル by 千穂 ← 資格……？ by 鈴乃		
特技・趣味	可愛いこと by 千穂		
志望動機	父を訪ねて by 鈴乃 ← 色々おかしい by 真奥		
本人希望欄	一家団欒 by 鈴乃		
通勤時間	ぼくといっしょ	扶養家族の有無	保護者の氏名

↑ by うるいはら  
貴様はそれについて何も思うところは無いのか by 芦屋

むー……いいなあ by 千穂  
ちょっと by 恵美

## 履歴書

氏名	アラス・クラン代筆・真奥		
生年月日	日生(月)	歳)	性別
な			
新			
電話			

月	学歴:既往歴

資格		
特技・趣味		
志望動機		
本人希望欄		
通勤時間	扶養家族の 有無	保護者の 氏名

これが

# 世界初公開!! 堕天使の秘密基地だ!!

(押し入れ)

芦屋に内緒で買ったLED  
購入した小型扇風機

芦屋に内緒で買ったLED  
熱くない。天袋から吊っている。

ニート堕天使の  
定位置

お菓子と  
PCパーツ

グチャグチャ  
コンセント

ノートPC

魔王城の寝具と衣類。  
最近何故かお菓子のカスがよく落ちている。

漆原!  
いいにしろ、加減

怒れる芦屋

両サイドを開ける  
ことで風が通る。



## **Credits**

**Hataraku Maou-sama! Volume 3**

**Author:** Wagahara Satoshi

**Illustrator:** 029

**English Translation by Psylocke**